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A Geographical Analysis of the Origin of National Football League Players and Draftees

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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December 2013

Honors Capstone in Sport Management

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Date: December 4, 2013

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Abstract

The inspiration for this examination of NFL football players came from a September 17, 2010 CBS Television program *60 Minutes* report “American Samoa: Football Island” by Scott Pelley. Pelley determined “that a boy born to Samoan parents is 56 times more likely to get into the NFL than any other kid in America” (Pelley, 2010). As a result of this investigation, I was inspired to travel to American Samoa in June 2013 to learn firsthand what variables and conditions led to the production of National Football League (NFL) Draft picks from this country, Tonga and all the regions within the United States of America.

The purpose of this Capstone is to determine where and why professional football players are coming from certain geographic regions to be drafted into the NFL. Twenty-six years of data, of NFL draft statistics from 1988-2013, help identify certain areas of the country that have proven success in producing NFL players. This study used linear regression analyses to isolate relationships between the hometown region of the NFL player and a multitude of different factors that may have a significant impact on a prospect’s becoming an NFL Draft pick. The data were compiled through the collection of information from *USA Today*, ProFootballReference.com and the NFL League Offices. Hometown was used as the reference point for each NFL player during this time period. *Hometown* is defined as the state or territory in which the player went to high school last before attending a college or a university. Breaking down the data even more, this document looks into which regions are producing the most NFL players at specific positions on the field.

The American Samoan culture and heritage have taught the NFL players coming out of this region the self-discipline to continue to work at their craft and get better at playing football each day. “[F]ootball is a way of life” for American Samoans (Savali, 2013). The shared goal of making it to the NFL through established paths of playing the game they love is now as strong as ever. Along with genetic and physical factors, American Samoan culture, demographics and the way its players practice football are the reasons that American Samoa is the most significant producer of NFL players per capita.

My conclusions from this research are that the big three states of Texas, Florida and California are the top regions for NFL talent because they are proven producers of most of the NFL players. Based on this data, I also have concluded if you are looking for a player for a specific position on the field (e.g., a quarterback), it is best to look at a region where the percentage of their NFL Draft picks is above the United States percentage for that position and one that has produced at least fifty NFL players; this will increase the efficiency of selecting an NFL-caliber player based on a certain position. Lastly, with regard to players growing up in the Southeast geographic region, higher obesity levels, income levels and educational ratings may factor into one’s having a better chance of

getting into the NFL as well. These results could be persuasive in an NFL or college recruiting room in choosing the next great NFL football player.

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Executive Summary

The inspiration for this examination of NFL football players came from a September 17, 2010 CBS Television program *60 Minutes* report “American Samoa: Football Island” by Scott Pelley. Pelley determined “that a boy born to Samoan parents is 56 times more likely to get into the NFL than any other kid in America” (Pelley, 2010). As a result of this investigation, I was inspired to travel to American Samoa in June 2013, to learn first-hand what variables and conditions led to the production of National Football League (NFL) Draft picks from this country, Tonga and all the regions within the United States of America.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the geographical origins of football players being drafted into the NFL. Twenty-six years of data, of NFL draft statistics from 1988-2013, help identify certain areas of the country that have proven success in producing NFL players. This study used linear regression analyses to isolate relationships between the hometown region of the NFL player and a multitude of different factors that may have a significant impact on his becoming an NFL draft pick. The data were compiled through the collection of information from *USA Today*, ProFootballReference.com and the NFL League Offices. Hometown was used as the reference point for each NFL player during this time period. *Hometown* is defined as the state or territory in which the player went to high school last before attending a college or a university. Breaking down the data even more, this document looks into which regions are producing the most NFL players at certain positions on the field.

A NFL player gets drafted based on four criteria: physical tools, mental and leadership strength, accomplished college career and potential. NFL teams evaluate over four hundred players each year to determine if they are worthy of being drafted. Only elite players will be selected by an NFL team. Besides through game footage, NFL draft-eligible players can display their football skills during the NFL Combine, which is held every year to evaluate players' eligibility for the NFL Draft. Each athlete goes through a series of physical skill tests to display his athleticism and through interviews to determine his cognitive ability. Each team rates a player based on how he compares with his peers in the same or similar positions. There is also an opportunity for players to demonstrate their football skills at College Pro Days, when players invite NFL scouts and coaches to watch them participate in drills like those of the NFL Combine, but at the college or university they are attending.

The independent variables that will be used to determine the significant factors of the hometown regions of these NFL players are: climate, population, poverty level, education grade, crime rate, obesity level, most prominent religious affiliation, unemployment rate, average income, number of NFL teams, number of FBS Division 1 College Football teams, area in square miles, number of high schools that play football and number of high school football participants.

Using historical data, one can determine which areas have been the highest producers for each football position. Historical statistics can help determine where recruiters and NFL front office personnel should be looking to fill certain positions for future years. For example, there might be some independent

variable, such as obesity levels among offensive linemen, that distinguishes a specific region. Beyond just the population of the regions, the other variables can help determine which player position each region has produced the most over the past twenty-six years.

The American Samoan culture and heritage have taught the NFL players coming out of this region the self-discipline to continue to work at their craft and get better at playing football each day. Talking with football players, you come to understand that for American Samoans, “football is a way of life” (Savali, 2013). Children on the mainland, when asked what they want to do when they grow up, will list various professions in different fields and locations around the world. However, if you ask young American Samoan football players, a significantly larger percentage will say they want to play professional football in the NFL. The shared goal of making it to the NFL through the established paths of playing the game they love is now as strong as ever. There are genetic and physical factors that make a person more physically gifted to make it to the NFL, but those are hard to account for. American Samoan culture, demographics and the way the Samoans practice football are the reasons that American Samoa is the most significant producer of NFL players per capita.

American Samoa has the characteristics and qualities to help athletes get drafted each year. The American Samoan culture allows for a focused, more relaxed and simplified life, without distractions. Players must be mentally and physically strong to endure the game of football using relatively primitive football equipment. The country is economically depressed, and players are motivated to

provide for their families by getting a college education to contribute to society. A college education can encourage American Samoans to put their self-discipline to use by getting them off the island, either through the military or through an athletic scholarship.

The significance of this research is that it explains the quantities and percentages of production of NFL Draft picks. These statistics do not lead to the NFL Draft picks' becoming stars, but maybe factors like the independent variables discussed in the document can at least help increase someone's chances of making it into the NFL. An analysis of the historical data shows that certain regions have distinct factors that stimulate the production of NFL Draft picks.

The NFL is a huge business, and the next twenty-six years might lead to a different set of results if this study were to be replicated in the future. NFL front office personnel and college scouts could apply these results to narrow the search for the next NFL player. This information can allow NFL executives and scouts to pinpoint certain regions of the country to look for talent for specific positions on the field.

These factors do not guarantee that a player from one of these top regions will be successful in the NFL, or even make it there; rather, this thesis presents historical findings that can help improve expectations for future outcomes. The percentage of the United States population drafted into the NFL is only 0.1021%. This percentage emphasizes the elite status of NFL players, because they are such a small percentage of the population, with the physical and mental tools to

succeed in professional football. They truly are the best of the best at playing the game of football.

My conclusions from this research determine that the three states of Texas, Florida and California are the top regions for NFL talent, because they are proven producers of most of the NFL players. Based on this data, I also have concluded that two variables influence a player's being drafted for a specific position (e.g., quarterback). The first is living in a region with the highest percentage of NFL Draft picks above the overall United States percentage for that position. The second is living in a region that has produced at least fifty (50) NFL players. Knowing this could increase the efficiency of selecting an NFL-caliber player. Lastly, growing up in the Southeast geographic region, with higher obesity levels, income levels and educational ratings, may factor into a better chance of getting into the NFL as well.

The hope is that college recruiting and NFL scouts could use this information to better refine their searches when scouting a player for his NFL draft potential. These results could be persuasive in an NFL or college recruiting room for choosing the next great football player.

The research in this document addresses a subject matter that could be further expanded by looking into the progression and effects of certain college programs in the production of NFL players. Additionally, including undrafted players may have increased the production in certain regions as well. This dataset involves twenty-six years, but it would also be interesting to compare the regions and the variables contributing to NFL players fifty years ago, taking into account

the style of NFL football in that era with the new age and big money game it is today.

Background Information

The sport of football has grown significantly since its origins with Walter Camp in the mid-19th century. The sport is a part of American culture, with a celebrated quasi-national holiday of Super Bowl Sunday, which is the most highly viewed television program of the year. Fans' enthusiasm for this sport comes from its creative blend of athleticism, strength and mental preparation. The sport involves a group of eleven players working cohesively against an opposing eleven players to score or prevent points from being scored.

Professional football is one of the top-grossing sports in the world, with an estimated revenue of \$9.5 billion in 2011-12 (Gaines, 2012). The National Football League is the organization by which professional football is governed and operated. The league is made up of thirty-two teams across the United States of America. Each team is currently made up of a roster of fifty-three players that can suit up for each of the sixteen season games. Each team has a salary cap of \$123 million dollars as of 2013, to supply itself with fifty-three players. Each player has a position on the field that accentuates his physical and mental strength in the sport of football. Some players are better suited to certain positions or styles based on their physical attributes.

Being a professional football player in the NFL indicates that a player is part of an individual team's roster. Rosters can be altered week-to-week through

the course of the season and the playoffs, through signing, cutting, putting a player on injured reserve or trading a player. These decisions are made by the front office executives of each NFL team. Each player negotiates a contract with a NFL team for a designated time and salary. Once a year, the NFL brings together all thirty-two teams to draft the next group of incoming professional football players. Once a team has drafted a player, it holds the rights to exclusively negotiate a contract with that player. Eligibility for the NFL draft is determined by the collective bargaining agreement made between the National Football League and the NFL Players Association. This agreement stipulates:

- a) “The Draft shall consist of seven rounds, with each round consisting of the same number of selection choices as there will be Clubs in the NFL the following League Year, plus a maximum number of additional Compensatory Draft Selections equal to the number of Clubs then in the League, with such Compensatory Draft Selections reserved for Clubs losing certain Unrestricted Free Agents. Each Draft shall be held between February 14 and June 2, on a date which shall be determined by the Commissioner.
- b) No player shall be permitted to apply for special eligibility for selection in the Draft, or otherwise be eligible for the Draft, until three NFL regular seasons have begun and ended following either his graduation from high school or graduation of the class with which he entered high school, whichever is earlier. For example, if a player graduated from high school in December 2011, he would

not be permitted to apply for special eligibility, and would not otherwise be eligible for selection, until the 2015 Draft.

- c) If a player who was not eligible for the Draft in any League Year becomes eligible after the date of the Draft, he will be eligible to be selected in a Supplemental Draft, if the League elects to conduct such a Draft, on or before the seventh calendar day prior to the opening of the first training camp that League Year. No player may elect to bypass a Draft for which he is eligible to apply for selection in a Supplemental Draft. Any Club that selects a player in a Supplemental Draft must forfeit a choice in the same round in the next succeeding principal Draft.
- d) No player shall be eligible to be employed by an NFL Club until he has been eligible for selection in an NFL Draft.” (NFLPA, 2011)

A NFL player gets drafted based on four criteria: physical tools, mental and leadership strength, accomplished college career and the potential to be great. NFL teams look at over four hundred players each year, to determine if they are worthy of being drafted. Only the elite players will be selected by an NFL team. Besides providing game footage, NFL draft eligible players can display their football skills during the NFL Combine, which is held every year for players eligible for the NFL draft. Each athlete goes through position drills, displays his athleticism and is interviewed to determine his cognitive ability. Each team rates a player on how they compare with their peers in the same or similar positions.

There is also an opportunity for players to demonstrate their football skills at College Pro Days, when players invite NFL scouts and coaches to watch them participate in drills like those of the NFL Combine, but at the college or university they are attending.

The Draft began in 1936 with the selection of Jay Berwanger by the Philadelphia Eagles in the first overall pick (History, 2013). In that draft, there were nine rounds for selection. Then there were only eight selections in the first round; now, there are thirty-two (History, 2013). Currently, the NFL Draft is made up of seven rounds, with last year's 2013 number one overall pick being Eric Fisher, selected by the Kansas City Chiefs. Each selection per round is representative of the number of teams in the league during that time. There are also compensation picks awarded by the NFL office when certain more highly valued players have left their team during free agency after being drafted by that team.

Free agency is an open market where players can sell their services to the highest bidder and choose which franchise they would like to sign a contract for. Draft picks can be traded prior to or during the NFL Draft. Picks can be exchanged, a player(s) for a pick can be traded, or future picks may be traded for current picks. Normally, during the NFL Draft, there is frequent maneuvering among the teams to position themselves with the right draft picks and to select the right players for their roster.

The purpose for this thesis document is to examine where professional football players originate from geographically before being drafted into the NFL.

Twenty-six years of NFL Draft statistics from 1988-2013 help identify certain areas of the country that have a historical record of producing NFL players. The data were compiled by collecting information from *USA Today*, ProFootballReference.com and the NFL League Offices. Using *hometown* as the reference point for each NFL player determined where the player was from. *Hometown* is defined as the state or territory where the player last went to high school before attending a college or university. Breaking down the data even more, this document examines which regions are producing the most NFL players for certain positions on the field. The hope is that college recruiting and NFL scouts can use this information to better refine their searches when scouting a player to see his NFL Draft potential.

Defining Variables

The independent variables that will be used to determine the significant factors in the hometown regions of these NFL players are: climate, population, poverty level, education grade, crime rate, obesity level, most prominent religious affiliation, unemployment rate, average income, number of NFL teams, number of FBS Division 1 College Football teams, area in square miles, number of high schools that play football and number of high school football participants.

Climate plays a large role in determining the amount of hours spent playing the game of football outside. In warmer climates, it is easier to play outside for more days of the year than in colder climates, where snow and weather may play a factor. This connects to the concept of the 10,000-hour rule. This

concept was “first espoused by K. Anders Ericsson, a psychologist at Florida State University [who claimed that] it takes about 10,000 hours of practice before any individual can become an expert. The corollary of this rule is that the differences in talent reflect differences in the amount and style of practice, and not differences in innate ability” (Lehrer, 2010). The outside environments for the geographic regions were classified under one of the following categories:

Southeast (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee), Northern Pacific (Alaska), South (Arizona, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas), Pacific West (California, Oregon and Washington), Midwest (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming), New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont), Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Virginia and Washington D.C.), Pacific Tropical (Hawaii, American Samoa and Tonga), and Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Wisconsin). These categories were based on similarities in weather patterns, geographic proximity and temperature over the course of the year.

Population of a state and territory plays a large role in the number of players available to play football. With greater numbers come enhanced possibilities for the number of NFL players originating from that region. In more populated regions, players can specialize in one sport because the competition to make a sport team is higher and requires greater skill to make a roster in high

school. As with Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, the best football players will make the football teams in high school. This process of the best players being selected will continue through higher athletic levels, all the way up to the NFL. The population data were collected using Census Bureau Data from 2011. The states with the highest populations were California (37,254,000), Texas (25,146,000) and New York (19,378,000), while the lowest populations were in American Samoa (69,543), Tonga (104,509) and Wyoming (564,000).

The poverty rate was used to help understand if the rags to riches stories that are publicized by the media are accurate motivating factors for NFL players. Having a high poverty rate would indicate that players are in poorer economic conditions and have to use football as a means to gain a better life for the player and his family. The poverty rates were determined by the 2011 Census Bureau Data, which defines poverty according to "the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14. The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps)" (Poverty, 2013). States or territories with the highest poverty rates are American Samoa (61.0%), Tonga (24.0%) and Mississippi (21.2%). The areas with the lowest levels of poverty are

Alaska (8.7%), Maryland (9.5%) and New Hampshire (9.6%). The benchmark of the United States Average of Poverty Rate is 14.9%.

Education can be a significant factor in providing opportunities for children as they grow up. Education is fundamental in our culture for increasing the gross income earned over the course of an individual's life. Having a strong education can encourage young men to engage in multiple activities and professions. Some NFL football players have above-average intelligence. Football accepts all players, with a wide variety of intelligence levels. The education data used in this paper was compiled using a grading system developed by the *US News: Education Week* publication. The data are based on results from the 2012 academic school year. The 2012 State Report Card numbers are based on: Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, Standards Assessment and Accountability, Teaching Profession, School Finance, and Transitions and Alignment.

A high education score can mean the young football players coming out of a region will be better mentally prepared for the challenges of college football and the pressure of being a student athlete. A negative aspect of high scores could be that the players at this aptitude level might be motivated to do something else with their physical or mental talents instead of playing football. With a low education score, athletes might see football as the only way to make a living because they do not have the educational skills. It might also be a hindrance for football players if they do not have the NCAA-mandated grades to qualify for college or have the mental preparedness for the elite game of football.

The schools with the highest educational scores based on this publication were Maryland (87.8), Massachusetts (84.2) and New York (83.9). The lowest educational scores based on the publication were South Dakota (68.1), Nebraska (69.8) and Washington, D.C. (69.9). The benchmark for comparison was the United States' score as a country: 76.5. American Samoa and Tonga were not included in this publication; therefore, their educational statistics are not included for this independent variable. Based on personal experience in American Samoa, and commentaries, it has been determined that this region, along with Tonga, would be near or at the bottom for their education report card score. American Samoa's education system will be discussed further in the American Samoa chapter.

Criminal behavior in a region continues the story of young football players from troubled areas overcoming the environment they were raised in to become top-level NFL talent. Crime in an area can increase the protective instincts of players, toughness, elusiveness and the drive to get out of the area. Also, crime in a region can reduce the number of great football players who do not make it out, by their going to jail or getting hurt or killed. These statistics were gathered by the United States Census Bureau for 2009. Rates are per 100,000 population; they include criminal offenses reported to law enforcement during that one-year time period of 2009 and are based on the population at that time. The criminal offenses included in the statistics were murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft and motor vehicle theft (Crime Rates by State, 2008 and 2009, and by Type, 2009, 2010). The regions with the highest crime rates were

Washington, D.C. (1.33%), Nevada (0.66%) and Alaska (0.64%). The areas with the lowest crime rates were Maine (0.12%), Vermont (0.13%) and New Hampshire (0.17%). The United States criminal rate average is 0.38%. The percentage of crimes may be lower than the actual crime rate, as a result of some criminal activity missing. The data included represent a wide base of crimes that clarify whether a region has a high crime rate or not. The reason for Washington, D.C.'s high percentage of crime could be a result of its small area and high population density, which increases the crime rate.

The obesity rate by state helps identify a physical attribute of football—especially regarding offensive and defensive interior linemen. According to a *Fox News* article, “size matters in the National Football League, but a new study suggests that a whopping 56 percent of NFL players would be considered obese by some medical standards. The NFL called the study bogus for using players' body-mass index, a height-to-weight ratio that doesn't consider body muscle versus fat” (Obesity Rampant in NFL, Study Says, 2005). With this being said, obese NFL players are common, and a region with a high obesity rate could have a higher probability of physically preparing football players for the size needed to play in the NFL. Obesity is also found more commonly in poorer areas as a result of fast food and junk food's being cheaper than healthier alternatives. The data were gathered using information from 2011. They are a compilation from the Trust for America's Health website and the CIA website, which gathered the information for American Samoa and Tonga. The regions with the highest obesity rates were American Samoa (74.6%), Tonga (56.0%) and Mississippi (34.9%). In

contrast, the areas with the lowest obesity levels were Colorado (20.7%), Hawaii (21.8%) and Massachusetts (22.7%). The benchmark for comparison is the United States average for obesity: 27.6%. Obesity in these regions has led to offensive and defensive linemen being a vast majority of the NFL talent being produced. This will be examined further later in this study.

Religious affiliation can be seen in many cases in the NFL. Some players are very vocal about their faith, while others maintain a quiet connection with their religious beliefs, and still others do not practice a religion at all. The majority religious affiliation for a region constitutes an independent variable that could have some influence on mentally supporting or stimulating an athlete to continue his pursuit of the NFL dream. Religious affiliation was determined by the majority percentage for each region and does not classify everyone in that region as a practicing member of the faith deemed to be in the majority. The data were gathered from *USA Today* for the year 2011. The leading majority for each region was broken down by the following religions: Baptist (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia), Catholic (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.), Methodist (Delaware), No Religion (Idaho, Oregon and Washington), Lutheran (North Dakota and South Dakota), Mormon (Utah) and Christian (American

Samoa and Tonga). For the most part, the Baptist religion was prominent in the South, while Catholics populate the most regions.

Unemployment was another independent variable tested to determine the economic environment for each region. If people cannot get jobs in their hometown, then they must seek work somewhere else, like in the NFL. If their parents do not have jobs, some young men realize they need football to get a scholarship to go to college. From there, if they make it to the NFL, they will be supporting their unemployed parents or family members. Many NFL players need the high salary to support members of their family who are struggling to find employment. This is another motivation driving athletes to pursue their goal of making it to the NFL, to support their families and give them a higher standard of living. The 2013 unemployment rates are shown as a percentage of the labor force and refer to place of residence. These data were collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the year 2013. The United States average unemployment rate was 7.1%. In comparison, the regions with the highest unemployment rates were American Samoa (29.8%), Tonga (13.0%), California (9.8%) and Rhode Island (9.8%). On the other side of the spectrum, the regions with the lowest unemployment rates were North Dakota (3.3%), Nebraska (3.8%) and South Dakota (4.4%). A reason for American Samoa's and Tonga's high unemployment rates is that they are two sets of Polynesian Islands in the Pacific Ocean and are very far away. Travel to these destinations is at least a ten-hour plane ride, with limited flight service. This eliminates the economic benefits of tourism, and the islands are too small to be completely self-sustaining. California,

one of the largest states, and Rhode Island, the smallest state, both have a high unemployment rate for the continental United States. The effect of unemployment is uncertain, because California has produced the most NFL Draft picks (876), while Rhode Island is tied for having generated the third-fewest (4) professional football players. However, the population of Rhode Island is significantly lower than most states and is limited by its geographical size. This shows that there may be other variables contributing to the number of NFL Draft picks from each region.

The average annual income of a region determines what type of lifestyle young football players can expect growing up in that specific region. If the income is not what young men envision for themselves, they will look for alternative options to obtain financial security. The NFL provides the opportunity for many young football players to earn a salary that can be significantly higher than that for any other job a person with the same set of skills could get outside of the NFL. In the United States, the average annual income is \$41,560, while “the 1,696 players who will be on the NFL’s opening day rosters the game delivers fabulous riches: Their average annual salary is \$1.9 million” (Boot, 2013). Despite having only an average 3.5-year playing career, this is significant compensation for players coming from more economically troubled areas. For many prospects, the salary in the NFL cannot be surpassed. The collective bargaining agreement between the NFL and NFLPA “mandates minimum levels of player salary but not maximum levels. Experience is based on earning a ‘credited season’, which is defined as more or less being on the active 53 man

roster for at least 3 games in a given season. In 2013 the minimum pay for a rookie is \$405,000 and for a veteran who has been at least 10 credited seasons it's \$940,000. The salary itself is earned in 17 weekly installments and does not require participation in a game to be earned" (The Components of a NFL Contract and the Salary Cap, 2012). The average income per capita for the regions was collected using data from the Bureau of Business and Economic Research for the year 2012. The regions with the highest income, according to the data, were Washington, D.C (\$73,783), Connecticut (\$57,902) and Massachusetts (\$53,471). The areas with the lowest average income were Tonga (\$3,580), American Samoa (\$18,219), Mississippi (\$32,000) and Idaho (\$32,881). Even the highest region of Washington, D.C., is 5.49 times smaller than the minimum annual salary of an NFL player. This difference in income, even for a short period of time, is enough incentive to keep football players motivated to make it to the NFL. Also, Tonga may be an outlier as a result of its currency conversion ratio to the United States dollar. Tonga uses the Tongan Pa'Anga for its currency, which equates to \$0.5455 U.S. dollars.

The number of NFL and Football Bowl Subdivisions (FBSs) in a region can expose young players to the highest level of play at a young age. These independent variables show if an individual is exposed to the professional or top level of college football, and if this might make them more inclined to make it to the NFL. Having firsthand exposure to the highest level of play is a constant reminder of the end goal. The NFL is made of 32 football teams in 31 cities across the country, while the college football FBSs are made up of 120 teams. The

NFL team data were collected based on the 2013 NFL league status, and the FBS information was collected by ESPN for the 2012-2013 seasons. Table 1 breaks down the 32 NFL and 120 FBS college football Division 1 teams by the regions where they are located. For the purposes of the data, the New York Giants and Jets were seen as being located in New York, even though they are physically located in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Table 1

<u>Regions</u>	<u>NFL Teams</u>	<u>Regions</u>	<u>NFL Teams</u>		<u>Regions</u>	<u>FBS Teams</u>	<u>Regions</u>	<u>FBS Teams</u>
CA	3	DE	0		TX	10	OR	2
FL	3	HI	0		OH	8	SC	2
NY	3	ID	0		CA	7	VA	2
OH	2	IA	0		FL	7	WA	2
PA	2	KY	0		LA	5	WV	2
TX	2	ME	0		MI	5	CT	1
AZ	1	MS	0		NC	5	HI	1
CO	1	MT	0		AL	4	MA	1
GA	1	NE	0		IN	4	MN	1
IL	1	NV	0		TN	4	MO	1
IN	1	NH	0		CO	3	NE	1
KS	1	NJ	0		IL	3	NJ	1
LA	1	NM	0		KY	3	WI	1
MD	1	ND	0		MS	3	WY	1
MA	1	OK	0		NY	3	AK	0
MI	1	OR	0		OK	3	DE	0
MN	1	RI	0		PA	3	ME	0
MO	1	SC	0		UT	3	MT	0
NC	1	SD	0		AZ	2	NH	0
TN	1	UT	0		AR	2	ND	0
WA	1	VT	0		GA	2	RI	0
WI	1	VA	0		ID	2	SD	0
DC	1	WV	0		IA	2	VT	0
AL	0	WY	0		KS	2	DC	0
AK	0	AS	0		MD	2	AS	0
AR	0	TO	0		NV	2	TO	0
CT	0				NM	2		

The highest number of NFL teams was three, which was found in California, Florida and New York, while the highest number of FBS teams in a region was led by Texas (10), Ohio (8), California (7) and Florida (7). These regions have high associations with producing the most number of NFL Draft picks. The fans in these regions like football passionately, which is all this variable is showing. It can be seen by the data collected that this variable might not be as significant as others because of limited exposure in some regions; moreover, there are numerous exceptions to this variable's being a significant factor. Of the total of fifty-three regions, twenty-nine did not have an NFL franchise, and twelve regions did not have a Division 1 FBS College football team. Numerous players have come from these regions without these variables being a factor, which shows their significance is not as strong as previously expected. Being exposed to the highest level of talent might encourage players to make it to that level, but it is not as strong a motivating factor as other variables previously mentioned in this document.

Geographic area is an interesting variable to consider. The dimensions for a football field are 53.33 yards wide by 120 yards long (100 yards for the field of play and two 10-yard deep touchdown areas) (NFL Football Field Dimensions/Diagram, 2012). Having the space to have these fields is important, so young athletes can have the practice facilities they need to play. This is where the geographic area comes into play. According to data collected by the United States Census Bureau, the regions with the highest number of square mile areas

are Alaska (665,384), Texas (268,596) and California (163,695), while the regions with the smallest areas are Washington, D.C. (68), Tonga (289) and American Samoa (581). While Alaska may have the greatest area, it has produced only ten NFL Draft picks during this twenty six-year period of time, while Washington, D.C., has the smallest area to work with, yet has produced thirty-five NFL Draft picks during that same time period. Geographic area is another variable that is not a complete justification for an NFL Draft pick, but it can provide prospects with the appropriate facilities and space to practice the game of football.

The last set of independent variables that were tested during the research looked at the number of high schools with high school football programs and the number of high school football athletes participating in those regions. The high school years are an important time period for developing physical skills sets for aspiring NFL players. High school football enables these athletes aspiring to top universities and colleges to receive excellent coaching while preparing to play in the NFL. High school football is when players are physically developing and learning competitive aspects of the game. More dedication is required during this time, with high school football teams having off-season conditioning and weightlifting. Regions with a higher number of high schools participating in high school football will increase competition, while creating opportunities for top athletes to participate in football. A large number of high schools participating in football usually can indicate a proven track record of NFL and college football

recruiting success in those regions, and this is why so many high schools choose to have participation in football.

The data were collected from the High School Athletics Participation Survey by the National Federation of State High School Associations, which shows competition at the high school level for the 2011-12 school years. The regions with the highest number of high schools participating in football were Texas (1,118), California (1,055) and Ohio (719). These numbers are consistent with the high number of NFL Draft picks coming from these areas. The lowest numbers of high schools participating in football were in American Samoa (7), Washington, D.C. (12) and Vermont (23). This could explain why Vermont does not have any NFL players coming from its region during this twenty-six-year window. There are not as many opportunities to play football in Vermont, so athletes expend their talents on other activities instead. Furthermore, the overall high school football participation shows the number of potential NFL players that could emerge from that group. With greater numbers come greater opportunities for success. It also indicates the importance of football participation in a region compared to participation in other sports.

The areas with the highest participation for high school football were Texas (167,477), California (104,334) and Illinois (47,445). The demand to play football in these regions was the highest, and as a result, they had the highest number of high schools participating in football. The areas with the lowest demand for football were Washington, D.C. (727), Vermont (1,172) and Alaska (2,063). Washington, D.C.'s low participation had a direct relation to the number

of high schools playing football in that area and was due to its being only a city, rather than a state or territory. Vermont and Alaska, located in northern regions, probably have more winter sport participation because it is a longer season, while football is played in the fall, which is shorter. American Samoa and Tonga are not included in the data for high school football participation because participation in these areas is more informal, with less documentation and records of participation. Table 2 shows the full level of participation for the regions and individual participants.

Table 2

High Schools With Football				High School Football Participants			
TX	1,118	CO	218	TX	167,477	KS	14,246
CA	1,055	AR	208	CA	104,334	KY	14,042
OH	719	SC	198	IL	47,445	OR	13,243
MI	648	OR	193	OH	46,463	AZ	12,237
PA	586	AZ	192	MI	42,743	AR	11,440
NY	572	MD	185	FL	41,127	OK	11,298
FL	554	NE	167	NY	35,552	CT	10,602
IL	548	CT	146	NC	35,338	NE	10,041
WI	427	WV	116	GA	32,726	UT	8,212
GA	405	ID	106	WI	28,426	ID	7,217
AL	387	UT	101	PA	26,370	NV	7,059
NC	374	NM	100	NJ	25,592	NM	6,764
MO	354	ND	97	VA	25,476	WV	6,089
NJ	345	MT	84	MN	23,816	HI	4,875
TN	345	ME	81	MO	23,178	MT	4,691
WA	339	NV	74	TN	22,994	ME	3,721
MA	326	SD	69	AL	22,715	SD	3,606
IN	315	NH	57	MS	22,306	NH	3,530
MN	308	WY	54	WA	22,090	ND	3,201
VA	306	HI	48	IN	22,050	DE	3,028
LA	293	DE	46	LA	20,293	RI	2,953
IA	291	RI	43	MA	19,865	WY	2,680

OK	269	AK	34		IA	19,519	AK	2,063
MS	242	VT	23		SC	18,854	VT	1,172
KS	241	DC	12		CO	15,595	DC	727
KY	222	AS	7		MD	14,912		

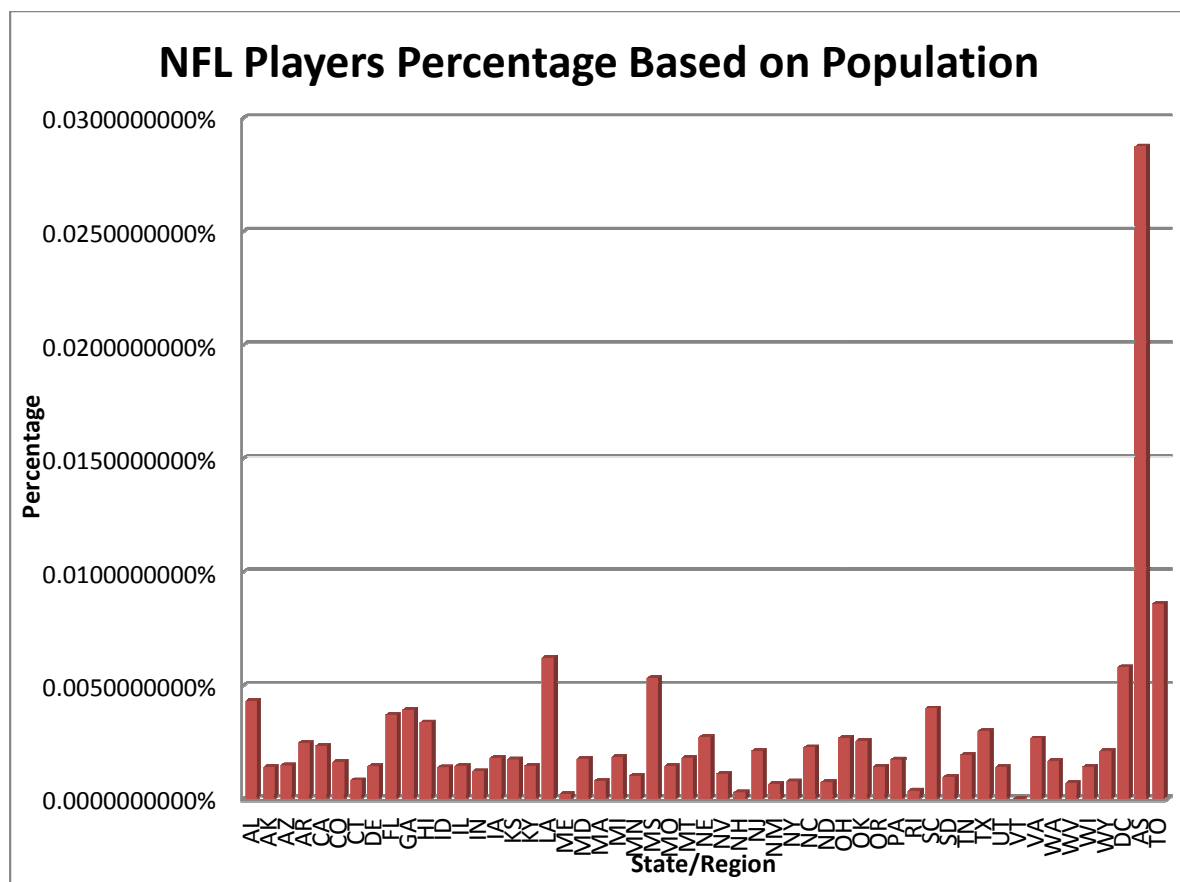
Going through the data and defining the variables is important to understanding the process of the research. The next section will examine the initial observations revealed by the data. The observations provide background for the independent variables and indicate how prevalent the statistics are in a region. This allows for an understanding of each region and of why NFL players are coming from certain regions more than others.

Data Observations

Some initial observations from the data set are as follows: The highest number of NFL players drafted during the years 1988-2013 came from the big three of NFL player-producing states, California (876), Texas (755), and Florida (697). The bottom four producers of NFL players were Vermont (0), Maine (3), Rhode Island (4) and New Hampshire (4). The differences in climate and population among these regions are apparent. When people think of football's regional "hotbeds," they think of California, Texas and Florida. These numbers support this common perception. These three states annually lead the country in yielding elite high school recruits for college football, have some of the historic winning college football programs, and, as supported by the data, generate the highest number of NFL Draft picks.

In the next section of this document the variables found in these states will be analyzed to determine which are most important in the production of NFL players, and to discover why Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island and New Hampshire fail to see significant results.

To better make a level comparison among states and territories, the data were converted to NFL Draft picks per capita for a regional population. When you look at the United States' entire population of 308,746,000 people, the percentage per capita of NFL football players is 0.1020554212%. By the same token, when this is applied to individual geographic regions, the highest-producing territories become American Samoa, Tonga and Louisiana. Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire remain at the lowest level. This provides a level playing ground for comparing the regions, taking out the independent variable of population.



Now that the variables have been defined and some basic observations have been made, the data can be used to determine the significance of the variables. The variables were chosen to illuminate a wide range of influences that may affect or encourage an individual to make it to the NFL. To determine what makes a NFL player, the most significant variables need to be clarified.

Linear Regression Results

This section discusses the linear regression test done to determine the significance of the variables observed and defined in the previous sections. The coefficients for each variable represent the relationship of that variable, on average, to the total number of NFL players produced per one thousand people in

a given population, for a one-unit increase of that variable. A negative coefficient signifies an inverse relationship, such that when the variable increases, the number of NFL players produced decreases. The reason for the coefficients being so small is explained by the NFL Draft picks' being a substantially small sample of the population. NFL players are the top professionals in their field and, therefore, even with the benefits of the significant variables tested in this regression, the exclusivity of being a NFL player is still apparent.

One of the assumptions of the classical linear regression (CLRM) is that there is no exact linear relationship among the regressors. If there are one or more such relationships among the regressors, we call it multicollinearity (Gujarati, 2011). Due to multicollinearity issues in the linear regression model, the variables of Poverty Rate, No Religion, Mormon, Number of High Schools with Football and Number of Participants in High Schools were not included in the regression here. The exclusion of these variables caused some problems in the regression analysis. The variables included did not cause econometric problems and addressed the research in the most complete way to determine important factors of production.

Qualitative variables are nominal scale variables which have no particular numerical values. We can "quantify" them by creating so-called dummy variables, which take the values of 0 and 1. Zero (0) indicates the absence of an attribute, while 1 indicates its presence. This process was used for the categorical variables of religion and climate region. The category that gets the value of 0 is called the reference, benchmark, or comparison category (Gujarati, 2011). The

benchmarks for these categorical variables were the Southeast region and Christian. The remaining variables were quantitative variables whose nominal values were used for comparison and regression analysis. The t-statistic represents the ratio of the coefficient to its standard error. The higher the absolute value of the t-statistic, the more statistically significant the coefficient. In the following table, *** denotes statistical significance below 1%, ** denotes statistical significance below 5%, and * denotes statistical significance below 10% (Gujarati, 2011). R squared measures the proportion of the variation in the regression and is explained by the regressors. Adjusted R squared takes degrees of freedom into account (Gujarati, 2011). In the following table, the regression results have been tested and listed by looking at the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable of total NFL players per population of one thousand.

Table 3

Dependent Variable: Total NFL Players per population of 1000

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>t-Statistic</u>
Constant	0.014034	0.387190
NPACIFIC	-0.035127	-1.582422
SOUTH	-0.020825	-3.914344***
PACIFICWEST	-0.020257	-3.921418***
MIDWEST	-0.013976	-2.377827**
NEWENGLAND	-0.030238	-6.570573***
MIDATLANTIC	-0.015040	-3.134724***
PACFICTROP	0.010024	1.538462
CENTRAL	-0.024053	-6.100440***
EDUCATION	-0.001062	-3.574153***
CRIME	-0.094681	-0.115208

OBESITY	0.185655	2.900647***
BAPTIST	0.004873	1.496575
CATHOLIC	0.003069	1.161842
METHODIST	-0.002854	-0.671620
LUTHERAN	-0.018934	-6.548812***
UNEMPLOYMENT	0.000191	0.216676
INCOME	0.000001	4.686404***
NFL	0.000615	0.416970
FBS	0.001509	1.600692
AREA	0.000000	0.240286
R-Squared	0.877121	
Adjusted R-Squared	0.792378	

All results in Table 3 reflect White heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors and covariance.

The data show that having a hometown in the South, Pacific West, Midwest, New England, Mid-Atlantic or Central region is a significant factor in becoming an NFL player. These categorical variables were benchmarked against the Southeast United States region. As seen in table 3, all of the coefficients are negative in comparison with the Southeast. The Southeast, which includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee, has a statistically significantly higher production of NFL players than anywhere else. A warmer climate more days in the year is something to take into account. This gives more time to be active outside participating in football or other physical activities. In keeping with the 10,000-hour rule, getting those hours will help make one great at playing football. In the Southeast, the

climate allows young football players to master the sport. The reason for the Pacific Tropical (3) and Northern Pacific's (1) not being significant is a result of those regions' sample sizes being the smallest. If these regions had a larger sample of NFL players, then their coefficients would be a more accurate description of the significance of these regions.

Education had a significant negative correlation when it came to the results. This goes along with the idea that young athletes growing up in regions with better educational systems might have opportunity to do something else instead of play football. A good educational system can give children more academic, as well as athletic, opportunities. With the poorer educational systems, it is more likely that football is one of the few options for children to get a college education and provide for their families. Football allows children in impoverished neighborhoods to earn a scholarship to pay for their college education and get away, with the hope that, from a college football team, they might be drafted.

The 2012 State Report Card numbers are based on the following measures: Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, Standards Assessment and Accountability, Teaching Profession, School Finance, and Transitions and Alignment. Worse scores in these areas produce a positive coefficient for making it to the NFL. Based on the regression results, less educational success can mean more football achievement. This is not to say that higher-achieving and higher-scoring school systems do not produce NFL players; rather, there is just a significantly greater number of NFL Draft picks coming from regions with poorer academics.

The linear regression results show a significant positive coefficient for the influence of obesity on the production of NFL Draft picks. This makes sense – football players are big people, with the average height being 6’2” and weight being 252 pounds (Longman, 2011). In the NFL, bigger is better. The significance of obesity for becoming an NFL player is increasing as the years progress. “In 1970, only one N.F.L. player weighed as much as 300 pounds, according to a survey conducted by The Associated Press. That number has expanded like players’ waistlines from three 300-pounders in 1980 to 94 in 1990, 301 in 2000, 394 in 2009 and 532 as training camps began in 2010” (Longman, 2011). The increase in size of league players is a result of players’ being bigger, better and faster. Regions with higher obesity levels will be more likely to have bigger people living in them, with the potential to choose football to exploit their physical size.

The religious affiliations of football players help contribute to a foundation of persistence and drive to make it to the NFL. For the regression results, only the Lutheran religion showed a significant negative result against the benchmark of Christianity. This is a very interesting result of the data. The “Lutheran denomination is the oldest Protestant denomination. It was founded (not deliberately at first) by Martin Luther, the German monk and professor who famously posted 95 Theses against the practice of indulgences in 1517. Martin Luther taught that salvation comes by the grace of God and faith in Christ alone, and the many rituals and works prescribed by the church were not only unnecessary, but a stumbling block to salvation” (Lutheranism, 2013). Based only

on a brief understanding of the religion, this faith might preach a more simple life not obstructed by the wealth that football can provide. Lutherans may feel so strongly about their faith that their motivation to make it in the NFL may not be as high as that in other religions. Religion could be a component in the motivation of athletes, dedicating them to making it to the NFL.

Income is a significant variable in producing NFL Draft picks, as both a motivator and supplier of the amenities that increase the chance for success. As mentioned earlier in this document, in 2013, the minimum pay for a rookie was \$405,000 and for a veteran with at least 10 credited seasons, \$940,000. The financial incentives to play in the NFL are very high. The minimum salary alone is considerably larger than most salaries of workers and the United States average of \$41,560. The regression results show a positive coefficient for income motivating players to succeed in the NFL. Also, the results show that an area with a little more income slightly increases the production of NFL players. This could be a result of better equipment, coaching and fields to practice the sport of football on. Furthermore, players with less money might need money more immediately and may not think of football as an immediate supplier of income for their families. As a result, these athletes may have to work in other professions instead of playing football. Higher income can provide more access and amenities for success, but its positive coefficient is not large enough that it increases NFL player production by a significant margin.

Player Positions by Region

Using the historical data, it can be determined which geographical areas have been the highest producers for each position on the football field. Historical statistics can help determine where recruiters and NFL front office personnel should be looking to find certain positions in years to come. There might be some independent variable that the region might be prevalent in, which can enhance football skill levels, such as size, speed or strength. Beyond population, other variables can help determine which player positions each region has produced for over the past 26 years.

Quarterback

The marquee position for football is the quarterback. What makes a good quarterback? The player needs to have exceptional arm strength to throw with power and accuracy. Also, the position requires a strong intelligence to examine defenses to determine where the best spot is to put the ball. Western Pennsylvania has garnered a reputation as a large producer of high-profile Hall of Fame quarterbacks, like Joe Montana, Joe Namath, Jim Kelly and Dan Marino, just to name a few. Despite this reputation, California leads the way with 61 quarterbacks, then Texas (37), Florida (20) and Pennsylvania (18). Of these, Pennsylvania has the highest percentage of NFL Draft picks, with 8.11% being quarterbacks. In this respect, the region has maintained a reputation for continued production over this time period. Texas is also receiving notoriety, with a recent *Sports Illustrated* article stating that Texas quarterbacks accounted for 21.9% of the starting NFL quarterbacks in week 2 of the 2013 NFL season (Perloff, 2013).

Some names include Matthew Stafford, Drew Brees, Robert Griffin III, Andrew Luck, Andy Dalton and Ryan Tannehill (Perloff, 2013). The recent success of Texas quarterbacks is attributed to the evolution of flag football during the offseason there, to spread offenses and to Texas' having the greatest numbers for competition for high school football (Perloff, 2013).

A higher percentage of quarterbacks could be a result of a region's not having many NFL Draft picks overall. In table 4, North Dakota's high percentage can be explained by the low sample size for players drafted into the NFL. There are ten hometown regions without a quarterback drafted into the NFL. It is also surprising that Maryland and New York, with their NFL Draft pick populations being 101 and 153, respectively, account for only three NFL quarterbacks. Quarterbacks constitute only 4.59% of the players drafted in the United States. The nature of the position is such that, if you have a good quarterback, you hold onto that player for as long as possible and only draft another as a backup. Some teams have had more success in drafting quarterbacks than others, which results in a disparity among teams. A new trend is to carry only two quarterbacks on the fifty-three-man roster, for the purpose of getting one extra field player who might see more play on the field than a third quarterback. This eliminates more positions for quarterbacks, because many teams only need two. Based on this data, I would be looking for a quarterback in a region where the percentage of quarterbacks is above the United States percentage and one that has at least fifty NFL players coming from that area, to reduce the probability of the data's being skewed by a small sample size. The highlighted regions in table 4 fulfill these

requirements. Based on these criteria, Oregon, Indiana, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Washington are the top five regions in which to look for NFL quarterbacks.

Table 4

<u>Region</u>	<u>% QBs</u>	<u># of QBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% QBs</u>	<u># of QBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
ND	20.00%	1	5	OH	3.85%	12	312
OR	14.55%	8	55	CO	3.61%	3	83
NM	14.29%	2	14	MO	3.45%	3	87
ID	13.64%	3	22	NV	3.33%	1	30
SD	12.50%	1	8	MI	3.26%	6	184
MT	11.11%	2	18	NJ	3.21%	6	187
IN	8.75%	7	80	MS	3.16%	5	158
AZ	8.42%	8	95	FL	2.87%	20	697
WY	8.33%	1	12	DC	2.86%	1	35
PA	8.11%	18	222	SC	2.70%	5	185
WA	7.96%	9	113	CT	2.38%	1	42
WV	7.69%	1	13	NC	2.29%	5	218
MA	7.55%	4	53	GA	2.10%	8	381
WI	7.41%	6	81	MN	1.82%	1	55
CA	6.96%	61	876	NY	1.32%	2	151
TN	6.45%	8	124	MD	0.97%	1	103
KY	6.25%	4	64	AK	0.00%	0	10
NE	6.00%	3	50	DE	0.00%	0	13
IA	5.45%	3	55	HI	0.00%	0	46
OK	5.21%	5	96	KS	0.00%	0	50
UT	5.13%	2	39	ME	0.00%	0	3
TX	4.90%	37	755	NH	0.00%	0	4
IL	4.81%	9	187	RI	0.00%	0	4
VA	4.67%	10	214	VT	0.00%	0	0
AL	4.35%	9	207	AS	0.00%	0	20
AR	4.17%	3	72	TO	0.00%	0	9

LA	3.89%	11	283	USA	4.59%	316	6,880
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Running Back and Full Back

Running back and full back are positions that are still valuable, despite the move toward more passing offenses and spread attacks. The running back position is still vital to team success to take pressure off the quarterback and wear down a defense. Both teams in this past Super Bowl, the San Francisco 49ers and Baltimore Ravens, had a strong running game led by running backs Frank Gore (Florida) and Ray Rice (New York). Many teams are moving away from the old approach of a single featured running back, and instead maintain a stable of backs to feed the hot hand and keep them fresh. This new approach has led to increased playing time for more running backs and extra importance on drafting new young running backs with less wear and tear on their bodies. The regions producing the highest number of NFL Draft pick running backs are California (94), Florida (87) and Texas (77), while there are eight regions without an NFL running back draft pick. The historical perception is that these three regions produce the most NFL running backs, along with mostly every other position. In the United States, running backs account for 10.42% of draft picks. In table 5, the data are organized according to the highest percentage of NFL Draft picks for a region for the positions of running back and fullback. The highlighted regions show the areas with 50+ NFL Draft picks and more than the 10.42% United States percentage, to show regions with the highest production of NFL running backs. Texas is not one of the highlighted regions, which shows it may produce a large quantity of NFL running backs, but in terms of total NFL players, it is not as significant as other

positions. Based on the data and the highlighted criteria, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Virginia and Nebraska are the top five regions in which to look for NFL running backs or fullbacks. Kansas is home to Barry Sanders, while Kentucky is home to names like Shaun Alexander and Michael Bush.

Table 5

Region	% RBs/FBs	# of RBs/FBs	Total NFL Picks	Region	% RBs/FBs	# of RBs/FBs	Total NFL Picks
RI	50.00%	2	4	ID	9.09%	2	22
NV	20.00%	6	30	MN	9.09%	5	55
KS	18.00%	9	50	MD	8.74%	9	103
KY	17.19%	11	64	AL	8.70%	18	207
MA	16.98%	9	53	AZ	8.42%	8	95
VA	16.36%	35	214	WV	7.69%	1	13
NE	14.00%	7	50	WI	7.41%	6	81
MO	13.79%	12	87	GA	7.35%	28	381
OK	13.54%	13	96	OR	7.27%	4	55
NY	13.25%	20	151	NM	7.14%	1	14
PA	13.06%	29	222	CO	6.02%	5	83
AR	12.50%	9	72	IL	5.88%	11	187
FL	12.48%	87	697	TN	5.65%	7	124
MI	11.96%	22	184	WA	5.31%	6	113
CT	11.90%	5	42	UT	5.13%	2	39
LA	11.31%	32	283	AS	5.00%	1	20
MT	11.11%	2	18	HI	4.35%	2	46
TO	11.11%	1	9	IA	1.82%	1	55
OH	10.90%	34	312	DE	0.00%	0	13
CA	10.73%	94	876	ME	0.00%	0	3
NJ	10.70%	20	187	NH	0.00%	0	4
TX	10.20%	77	755	ND	0.00%	0	5
NC	10.09%	22	218	SD	0.00%	0	8
AK	10.00%	1	10	VT	0.00%	0	0
IN	10.00%	8	80	WY	0.00%	0	12
SC	9.73%	18	185	DC	0.00%	0	35
MS	9.49%	15	158	USA	10.42%	600	6,880

Wide Receiver and Tight End

The wide receiver and tight end positions combine physical size and/or speed with great hands and leaping ability. Wide receivers need soft hands to make catches, exceptional speed to break away from defenders and jumping ability to go up and get the ball. Tight ends need similar traits, along with the ability to block when called upon. Wide receivers have received growing publicity, as a result of the increased passing in the league and more spread attacks. Some receivers who have benefited from passing offenses in the NFL are prolific receivers like Calvin Johnson (Georgia), Jerry Rice (Mississippi), Larry Fitzgerald (Pennsylvania) and Randy Moss (West Virginia). With these evolving passing offenses, tight ends need to have advanced receiving abilities as well, like Tony Gonzalez (California), Antonio Gates (Michigan), Jimmy Graham (North Carolina) and Rob Gronkowski (Pennsylvania). In table 6, the data are organized according to the highest percentage of NFL Draft picks for a region for the positions of wide receiver and tight end. The United States percentage of wide receivers and tight ends is 18.66% of the total number of NFL Draft picks. Based on the same criteria as the previous two positions – that is, of fifty NFL Draft picks and a percentage higher than that of the United States – the top five regions for wide receivers and tight ends are Iowa, Missouri, Washington, Indiana and Oklahoma. The set of regions that fit the criteria are highlighted in table 6. Some tight ends from Iowa include Dallas Clark and Brandon Meyers, who is a surprising highest percentage producer, based on the criteria. The highest producers of these positions overall are California (187), Florida (140) and Texas

(124). Both California and Florida are highlighted, but Texas is not because these positions do not make up a large portion of Texas's NFL Draft picks above the United States percentage.

Table 6

Region	% WRs/TE's	# of WRs/TE's	Total NFL Picks	Region	% WRs/TE's	# of WRs/TE's	Total NFL Picks
ME	33.33%	1	3	GA	17.85%	68	381
IA	30.91%	17	55	MS	17.72%	28	158
DC	28.57%	10	35	OH	17.63%	55	312
NH	25.00%	1	4	TN	16.94%	21	124
RI	25.00%	1	4	AZ	16.84%	16	95
MO	24.14%	21	87	MD	16.50%	17	103
WA	23.89%	27	113	TX	16.42%	124	755
IN	23.75%	19	80	PA	16.22%	36	222
DE	23.08%	3	13	SC	15.68%	29	185
WV	23.08%	3	13	KY	15.63%	10	64
OK	22.92%	22	96	UT	15.38%	6	39
LA	22.26%	63	283	NY	14.57%	22	151
OR	21.82%	12	55	ID	13.64%	3	22
NM	21.43%	3	14	HI	13.04%	6	46
CA	21.35%	187	876	SD	12.50%	1	8
AR	20.83%	15	72	CT	11.90%	5	42
CO	20.48%	17	83	MT	11.11%	2	18
AL	20.29%	42	207	WI	11.11%	9	81
FL	20.09%	140	697	TO	11.11%	1	9
ND	20.00%	1	5	AK	10.00%	1	10
NC	19.27%	42	218	NV	10.00%	3	30
NJ	19.25%	36	187	MA	9.43%	5	53
IL	18.72%	35	187	NE	8.00%	4	50
VA	18.69%	40	214	AS	5.00%	1	20
MI	18.48%	34	184	VT	0.00%	0	0
MN	18.18%	10	55	WY	0.00%	0	12
KS	18.00%	9	50	USA	18.66%	1284	6,880

Offensive Line

Offensive linemen make up the five positions of left tackle, left guard, center, right guard and right tackle. These linemen need to be smart, big, and strong and have quick feet to stay in front of blitzing defenders. Most starting offensive linemen weigh in at over three hundred pounds. Offensive linemen are essential for protecting the quarterback, so he has enough time to throw the football, and for blocking the running back, to make holes to get yards. These athletes usually do not get the attention they deserve and are usually only noticed if they do something wrong, like miss a block or get a penalty. The left tackle has developed as the most important position; this is portrayed in a recent motion picture, *The Blind Side*, which follows the teenage life of Michael Oher (Tennessee).

The United States percentage for producing offensive linemen is 16.28% of NFL Draft picks. This percentage makes up the five positions, and if a team has a good player at one of these positions, they usually try to keep them as long as they can. Unity and working together are very important for offensive linemen, which is why some game announcers will mention the changing of a team's offensive linemen if they are not doing so well. The highest producers of NFL offensive linemen are California (135), Texas (111) and Florida (68). Despite their high numbers of offensive linemen produced, they do not fulfill the criteria for the highlighted regions in table 7 (of 50+ NFL Draft picks and a percentage of offensive linemen above the United States percentage). Leading the way in percentage for the highlighted regions is Wisconsin, which has garnered a

reputation as a good producer of NFL offensive linemen. Recent draft picks include Joe Thomas, Doug Free, Peter Konz and Mark Tauscher, to name several. Offensive linemen account for 38.27% of Wisconsin's 81 NFL Draft picks. Many of the Wisconsin offensive linemen attend the University of Wisconsin, which has developed many NFL Draft pick offensive linemen as well. Other areas with good offensive linemen are Minnesota, Massachusetts, Iowa and Pennsylvania.

Table 7

<u>Region</u>	<u>% OL</u>	<u># of OL</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% OL</u>	<u># of OL</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
ND	40.00%	2	5	IN	17.50%	14	80
DE	38.46%	5	13	OK	16.67%	16	96
WI	38.27%	31	81	MT	16.67%	3	18
HI	34.78%	16	46	WY	16.67%	2	12
TO	33.33%	3	9	MI	16.30%	30	184
ME	33.33%	1	3	TN	16.13%	20	124
MN	32.73%	18	55	VA	15.89%	34	214
WV	30.77%	4	13	KY	15.63%	10	64
MA	30.19%	16	53	CA	15.41%	135	876
AK	30.00%	3	10	AS	15.00%	3	20
IA	27.27%	15	55	NJ	14.97%	28	187
ID	27.27%	6	22	TX	14.70%	111	755
PA	25.68%	57	222	NM	14.29%	2	14
NH	25.00%	1	4	AL	14.01%	29	207
NY	23.84%	36	151	MS	13.92%	22	158
CT	23.81%	10	42	SD	12.50%	1	8
OR	23.64%	13	55	LA	12.01%	34	283
IL	23.53%	44	187	MD	11.65%	12	103
AR	22.22%	16	72	GA	11.55%	44	381
WA	22.12%	25	113	NC	11.01%	24	218
UT	20.51%	8	39	FL	9.76%	68	697
CO	20.48%	17	83	SC	9.19%	17	185
NE	20.00%	10	50	KS	6.00%	3	50
DC	20.00%	7	35	NV	3.33%	1	30
OH	19.23%	60	312	RI	0.00%	0	4
MO	18.39%	16	87	VT	0.00%	0	0
AZ	17.89%	17	95	USA	16.28%	1120	6,880

Defensive Line

When it comes to defense, it usually starts up front on the defensive line. A high quality defensive line can lead to a good defense in general. Defensive linemen need to be quick, elusive, big, and strong and have good hand technique. The defensive line varies, depending on the type of defense a team runs. A 4-3 defense, where there are four down linemen on the defense, includes the left defensive end, the nose tackle (under tackle), the defensive tackle (three technique) and the right defensive end. A 3-4 defense is made up of three down linemen on the defense; it includes the left defensive end, the nose tackle and the right defensive end. Depending on which defense a team runs, they will draft more or fewer defensive linemen. Since the creation of the NFL sack, defensive linemen have become superstars. They use their physical capabilities and mental aptitude to beat three-hundred-pound offensive linemen and sack the marquee position of quarterback. Some great current and former defensive linemen are J. J. Watt (Wisconsin), Reggie White (Tennessee), Warren Sapp (Florida) and Vince Wilfork (Florida). The top producers for NFL Draft pick defensive linemen are Texas (117), Florida (114) and California (103). Despite these high numbers, none of these regions is highlighted, because they none has a percentage of defensive linemen larger than the United States percentage of 16.56%. The top regions, according to the criteria in table 8, are South Carolina, Alabama, Missouri, Michigan and Arkansas. Some players from these regions include Carlos Dunlap (South Carolina), Robert Ayers (South Carolina), Connor Barwin (Michigan) and Jamal Anderson (Arkansas). American Samoa has an amazing

60% of their NFL Draft picks being defensive linemen, which accounts for twelve NFL players. This is more than the ten from Nebraska, which is considered a high producer according to the highlighted criteria. In the American Samoan section of this document, this high percentage will be explained in detail.

Table 8

<u>Region</u>	<u>% DL</u>	<u># of DL</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% DL</u>	<u># of DL</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
AS	60.00%	12	20	FL	16.36%	114	697
NH	50.00%	2	4	CO	15.66%	13	83
UT	35.90%	14	39	OK	15.63%	15	96
TO	33.33%	3	9	TX	15.50%	117	755
HI	28.26%	13	46	DE	15.38%	2	13
MT	27.78%	5	18	WV	15.38%	2	13
CT	26.19%	11	42	MA	15.09%	8	53
DC	25.71%	9	35	IN	15.00%	12	80
WY	25.00%	3	12	NM	14.29%	2	14
SC	24.32%	45	185	ID	13.64%	3	22
AL	24.15%	50	207	MN	12.73%	7	55
MO	22.99%	20	87	KY	12.50%	8	64
MI	21.74%	40	184	OH	12.50%	39	312
AR	20.83%	15	72	WA	12.39%	14	113
NJ	20.32%	38	187	WI	12.35%	10	81
GA	20.21%	77	381	VA	12.15%	26	214
TN	20.16%	25	124	KS	12.00%	6	50
AK	20.00%	2	10	CA	11.76%	103	876
NE	20.00%	10	50	PA	11.71%	26	222
ND	20.00%	1	5	AZ	10.53%	10	95
MS	18.35%	29	158	NV	6.67%	2	30
IL	18.18%	34	187	OR	5.45%	3	55
NY	17.88%	27	151	ME	0.00%	0	3
MD	17.48%	18	103	RI	0.00%	0	4
NC	17.43%	38	218	SD	0.00%	0	8
LA	16.61%	47	283	VT	0.00%	0	0
IA	16.36%	9	55	USA	16.56%	1139	6,880

Linebacker

The linebacker position contains the quarterback of the defense.

Linebackers need to be able to read the offense to call out an audible command, and need to have pass rush abilities, pass coverage abilities and good tackling fundamentals. As with the defensive linemen, the number of linebackers is dependent on the defensive scheme run by the team. In a 4-3 defense, there are a left outside linebacker, a middle linebacker and a right outside linebacker. In a 3-4 defensive scheme, another middle linebacker is added to the formation. Some great linebackers include Derrick Brooks (Florida), Ray Lewis (Florida), Laurence Taylor (Virginia) and Clay Matthews (California). The top producers for NFL linebackers are Florida (104), California (101) and Texas (99). In contrast, there are seven regions without a single linebacker drafted into the league. Both Florida and Texas are highlighted in table 9 because they have at least fifty NFL Draft picks and a percentage larger than the United States percentage of 12.79%. The top five regions, based on the highlighted criteria for the position of linebacker, are Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina and New Jersey. Some linebackers from these regions include Navorro Bowman (Maryland), E. J. Henderson (Maryland), Lofa Tatupa (Massachusetts), Brandon Spikes (North Carolina), Dannell Ellerbe (North Carolina) and Brian Cushing (New Jersey). Nevada is an interesting region, with only thirty NFL Draft picks, yet it still produced the same number of NFL linebackers as Kansas.

Table 9

<u>Region</u>	<u>% LBs</u>	<u># of LBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% LBs</u>	<u># of LBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
SD	50.00%	4	8	AZ	11.58%	11	95
NV	36.67%	11	30	CA	11.53%	101	876
ME	33.33%	1	3	MI	11.41%	21	184
WY	25.00%	3	12	MT	11.11%	2	18
ID	22.73%	5	22	WI	11.11%	9	81
KS	22.00%	11	50	TO	11.11%	1	9
MD	20.39%	21	103	IA	10.91%	6	55
MA	18.87%	10	53	HI	10.87%	5	46
NC	18.35%	40	218	SC	10.81%	20	185
NJ	17.11%	32	187	PA	10.36%	23	222
UT	15.38%	6	39	CO	9.64%	8	83
FL	14.92%	104	697	OK	9.38%	9	96
GA	14.70%	56	381	WA	8.85%	10	113
NY	14.57%	22	151	IN	8.75%	7	80
NM	14.29%	2	14	DC	8.57%	3	35
NE	14.00%	7	50	LA	7.77%	22	283
MS	13.92%	22	158	DE	7.69%	1	13
IL	13.90%	26	187	AR	2.78%	2	72
TN	13.71%	17	124	MO	1.15%	1	87
VA	13.55%	29	214	AK	0.00%	0	10
TX	13.11%	99	755	NH	0.00%	0	4
MN	12.73%	7	55	ND	0.00%	0	5
OR	12.73%	7	55	RI	0.00%	0	4
KY	12.50%	8	64	VT	0.00%	0	0
OH	12.18%	38	312	WV	0.00%	0	13
AL	12.08%	25	207	AS	0.00%	0	20
CT	11.90%	5	42	USA	12.79%	618	6,880

Defensive Back

Defensive backs include the left and right corner back, the free safety and the strong safety. These players are tasked with covering all the players coming out for a pass and coming up in run support. Corner backs need to have fluid movements and to be able to react to what a receiver or offense is doing very

quickly, in order to defend the play. Safeties, for the most part, are the last line of defense and provide the big hit to separate the ball from the receiver when they come across the middle of the field. Great defensive backs who have done their job exceptionally well are Deon Sanders (Florida), Darrelle Revis (Pennsylvania), Richard Sherman (California), Troy Polamalu (California), Ed Reed (Florida) and Darren Sharper (Virginia). These players are the best of the modern era of football, defending the spread and more passing offenses. Based on the data collected, the United States percentage of defensive backs selected is 19.07%. This number is the highest as a result of its including four starting positions and it can be even higher when teams go into nickel (five secondary defenders) and dime (six secondary defenders) defenses to play the pass. Also, there are very few shutdown defensive backs in the league; therefore, a team will use multiple draft picks in order to find one. The top producers for defensive backs are California (180), Texas (176) and Florida (171). All three of these regions are highlighted according to the criteria of fifty NFL Draft Picks and a higher percentage than the United States total. South Carolina is leading the way for the highlighted criteria in defensive backs, with 26.49% of its 185 draft picks' being defensive backs. The rest of the top five for these standards are Louisiana, Florida, Texas and Maryland. Some of the defensive backs from these regions include Johnathan Joseph (South Carolina), Nnamdi Asomugha (Louisiana), Reggie Nelson (Florida), Earl Thomas (Texas) and Joe Haden (Maryland). Virginia is another area producing several of the NFL's defensive backs, but this does not make up enough of a percentage of their NFL Draft picks to be considered by the criteria.

Table 10

<u>Region</u>	<u>% DBs</u>	<u># of DBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% DBs</u>	<u># of DBs</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
AK	30.00%	3	10	NM	14.29%	2	14
SC	26.49%	49	185	DC	14.29%	5	35
LA	25.44%	72	283	IL	13.90%	26	187
RI	25.00%	1	4	IN	13.75%	11	80
WY	25.00%	3	12	TN	13.71%	17	124
FL	24.53%	171	697	NJ	13.37%	25	187
TX	23.31%	176	755	PA	13.06%	29	222
MD	23.30%	24	103	OR	12.73%	7	55
GA	23.10%	88	381	NY	12.58%	19	151
CO	22.89%	19	83	CT	11.90%	5	42
MS	22.78%	36	158	WI	11.11%	9	81
NC	20.64%	45	218	MN	10.91%	6	55
CA	20.55%	180	876	NE	10.00%	5	50
OH	20.51%	64	312	HI	6.52%	3	46
AZ	20.00%	19	95	MT	5.56%	1	18
VA	18.22%	39	214	IA	5.45%	3	55
KS	18.00%	9	50	UT	2.56%	1	39
KY	17.19%	11	64	MA	1.89%	1	53
WA	16.81%	19	113	ID	0.00%	0	22
AR	16.67%	12	72	ME	0.00%	0	3
NV	16.67%	5	30	NH	0.00%	0	4
AL	15.94%	33	207	ND	0.00%	0	5
OK	15.63%	15	96	SD	0.00%	0	8
DE	15.38%	2	13	VT	0.00%	0	0
WV	15.38%	2	13	AS	0.00%	0	20
MO	14.94%	13	87	TO	0.00%	0	9
MI	14.67%	27	184	USA	19.07%	1137	6,880

Kicker and Punter

The last positions that will be discussed in this document are the special team's kickers and punters. Both play an integral role in deciding the winning or losing of games, but they are still forgotten when people think of football players. Kickers kick field goals for three points, through the uprights in the end-zone, and for extra points, for one point after touchdowns. Punters, on the other hand, kick

the ball when the offensive team wants to change field positions on fourth down, to give the opponent the ball when the offense has been stalled. Both positions can handle kickoffs as well. Kickers and punters need a strong and accurate leg with strong mental toughness to not be affected by the pressure of the moment or previous failures. If kickers and punters are consistently good, they can play into their late thirties and early forties. Usually, most teams keep only one punter and one kicker on their roster, because these positions usually do not have as high a risk of injury as other positions on the field, and these players are on the field only for certain types of plays. Some of the best kickers are Adam Vinatieri (South Dakota), Sebastian Janikowski (Florida) and Morten Anderson (Indiana). As for punters, Shane Lechler (Texas), Jeff Feagles (California) and Andy Lee (South Carolina) are some of the really good ones. The United States percentage for kickers and punters drafted is 1.88%. This number is not high because teams keep a good kicker or punter once they have one, many special teams' players go undrafted. The top producers for kickers and punters are Texas (15), California (14) and Florida (13). There are nineteen regions without any kicker or punter drafted. Only Texas is highlighted as a result of its higher percentage than the United States. The top five regions producing NFL kickers and punters, according to the criteria, are Arizona, Nebraska, Tennessee, Kansas and Ohio. Some specialists from these regions include Nick Harris (Arizona), Dan Carpenter (Nebraska), Sam Koch (Nebraska), Dustin and Britton Colquitt (Tennessee) and Matt Prater (Ohio).

Table 11

<u>Region</u>	<u>% K/P</u>	<u># of K/P</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>% K/P</u>	<u># of K/P</u>	<u>Total NFL Picks</u>
SD	12.50%	1	8	OK	1.04%	1	96
AZ	8.42%	8	95	MD	0.97%	1	103
NE	8.00%	4	50	NC	0.92%	2	218
TN	7.26%	9	124	LA	0.71%	2	283
MT	5.56%	1	18	MS	0.63%	1	158
KS	4.00%	2	50	AL	0.48%	1	207
NV	3.33%	1	30	VA	0.47%	1	214
OH	3.21%	10	312	AK	0.00%	0	10
GA	3.15%	12	381	AR	0.00%	0	72
KY	3.13%	2	64	CT	0.00%	0	42
WA	2.65%	3	113	DE	0.00%	0	13
IN	2.50%	2	80	HI	0.00%	0	46
MI	2.17%	4	184	ID	0.00%	0	22
NY	1.99%	3	151	ME	0.00%	0	3
TX	1.99%	15	755	MA	0.00%	0	53
FL	1.87%	13	697	NH	0.00%	0	4
IA	1.82%	1	55	NM	0.00%	0	14
MN	1.82%	1	55	ND	0.00%	0	5
OR	1.82%	1	55	RI	0.00%	0	4
PA	1.80%	4	222	UT	0.00%	0	39
CA	1.60%	14	876	VT	0.00%	0	0
WI	1.23%	1	81	WV	0.00%	0	13
CO	1.20%	1	83	WY	0.00%	0	12
MO	1.15%	1	87	DC	0.00%	0	35
SC	1.08%	2	185	AS	0.00%	0	20
IL	1.07%	2	187	TO	0.00%	0	9
NJ	1.07%	2	187	USA	1.88%	129	6,880

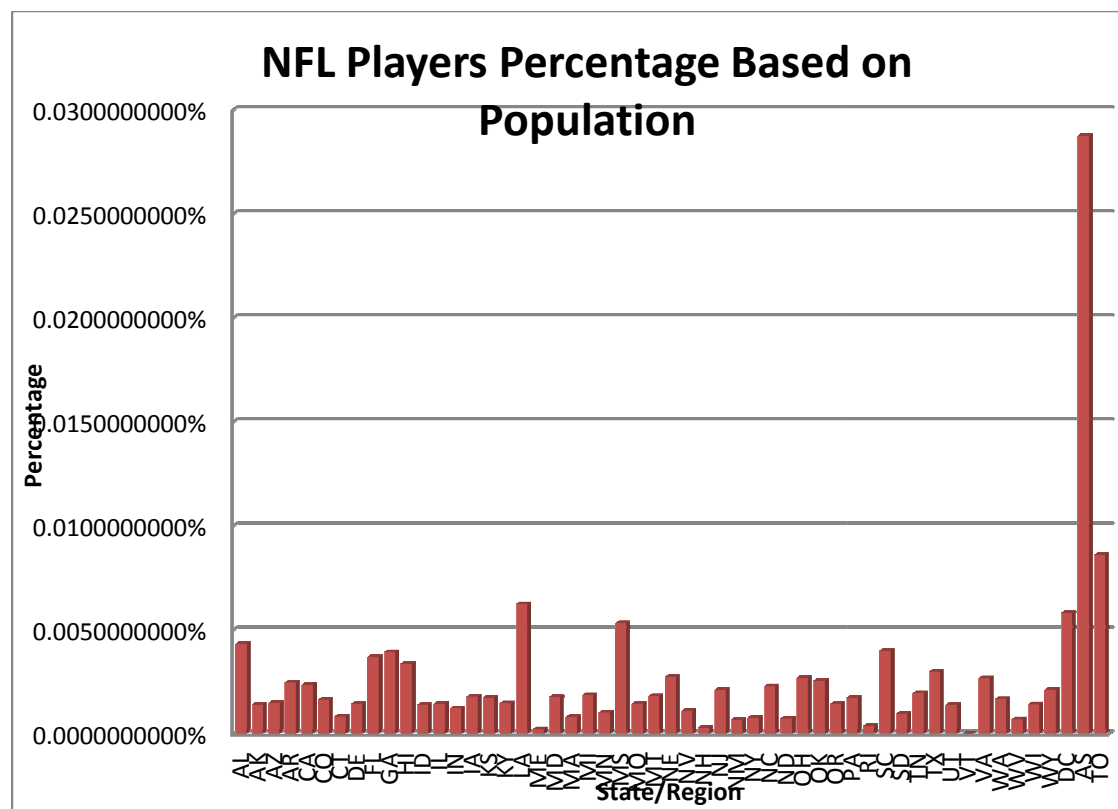
American Samoa Case Study



Introduction



From the data collected in this study, the results show that on a per capita basis, a person with an American Samoan hometown is 14 times more likely to go to the NFL than anyone on the mainland United States. The inspiration for this examination of American Samoan football came from the September 17, 2010 CBS Television *60 Minutes* report “American Samoa: Football Island” by Scott Pelley. Pelley determined that “in the last five years alone, the island's six high schools have produced 10 NFL linemen. It's estimated that a boy born to Samoan parents is 56 times more likely to get into the NFL than any other kid in America” (Pelley, 2010). In the chart “NFL Players Percentage Based on Population,” American Samoa is labeled AS and prospects can be seen to have a significantly higher probability of making it to the NFL, based on the population of the region. This does not include players with Samoan parents that have a hometown on the mainland United States, which can lead to the statistic that Pelley used.



The people in American Samoa come “from an island of just 65,000 people, [yet] there are more than 30 players of Samoan descent in the NFL and over 200 playing Division I college ball. That's like 30 current NFL players coming out of Sparks, Nevada, or Gastonia, North Carolina” (Pelley, 2010). The first Samoan football player was Lolo Ti, and the first Samoan to make it to the NFL was Samoa Samoa.

American Samoa is a very small set of islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, yet despite this geographic distance, it is producing NFL football players at a higher percentage than anywhere in the United States. In the period 1988-2013, there have been twenty American Samoans drafted. Of those 20 players, 15, or 75 percent, have been either offensive or defensive linemen. One high school, Samoana High School, currently has five NFL players, the most on the island;

these include Domata Peko, Matt Toeaina, Kurk Toufaasau and Isaac Sopoaga (Scott Boeck, 2008).

In American Samoa, “bigger is better,” and this is illustrated by their 74.6% obesity level (American Samoa, 2013). These American Samoan boys get recruited out of high school with their size already established, so that they can focus on learning techniques, rather than adding weight. Samoan offensive and defensive linemen have an established pathway following the success of the following players (Rainer, 2013):

Isaac Sopoaga-Samoana high school

Domata Peko-Samoana high school

Gabe Reid-Leone high school

Jonathan Fanene-Tafuna high school

Junior Siavii-Tafuna high school

Shaun Nua-Tafuna high school

Paul Soliai-Nu'uuuli Voc-Tech high school

Matt Toeaina-Samoana High school

Melila Purcell-Leone High School.

The list of players would be greater, but many football players and their families move off-island to the mainland for a better chance at getting scouted by colleges and having the academic foundation to succeed at top football universities. NFL players with family or parents born on the island are not included in this list; this has to be taken into account to understand the full magnitude of the abundant supply of Samoan NFL players. The list below consists of NFL players born in

American Samoa, but not all of them grew up on the island or played high school football there (Players Born in American Samoa, 2013).

Players Born in , American Samoa					
#	Name	Pos	City	From	To
1	Tuufuli Uperesa	G		1971	1971
2	Wilson Faumuina	DT		1977	1981
3	Mosi Tatupu	RB	Pago Pago	1978	1991
4	Mekeli Ieremia	DT	Niosafutu	1978	1978
5	Jack Thompson	QB	Tutuwila	1979	1984
6	Niko Noga	LB		1984	1991
7	George Achica	DT		1985	1985
8	Navy Tuiasosopo	C		1987	1987
9	Pete Noga	LB		1987	1987
10	Al Noga	DE		1988	1994
11	Pio Sagapolutele	DT		1991	1997
12	Lonnie Palelei	G	Nu'uuli	1993	1999
13	Maa Tanuvasa	DE	Nu'uli	1995	2001
14	Don Sasa	DT		1995	1998
15	Joe Salave'a	DT	Leone	1998	2006
16	Spencer Reid	LB	Pago Pago	1998	1999
17	Mao Tosi	DT	Mauia	2000	2001
18	Junior Ioane	DT		2001	2005
19	Anton Palepoi	DE		2002	2005
20	Toniu Fonoti	G		2002	2006
21	Lauvale Sape	DT		2003	2005
22	Gabe Reid	TE	Pago Pago	2003	2006
23	Junior Siavii	DT	Pago Pago	2004	2010
24	Isaac Sopoaga	DT	Pago Pago	2005	2012
25	Jonathan Fanene	DE	Pago Pago	2005	2011
26	Reagan Mauia	RB		2007	2012
27	Ropati Pitoitua	DE		2009	2012
28	Daniel Te'o-Nesheim	DE	Pago Pago	2010	2012
29	Mike Iupati	G		2010	2012

This section is dedicated to explaining why American Samoa produces so many more NFL football players per capita than anywhere else in the United States. I will use my personal interviews, observations and experiences from fieldwork on June 13-21, 2013, in American Samoa to generate an analysis of the unique characteristics of American Samoan culture. This commentary will add to the overarching thesis of this paper to provide a greater understanding of the cultural impact of America Samoa, in being such a significant NFL pipeline.

My investigation into this topic will go beyond the statistical data to uncover the essence of American Samoa and what makes it special. This study will be conducted by first discussing the statistical data and the purpose for examining American Samoan football athletes. Next, a brief look into American Samoan climate and history will be described, to create a greater understanding of the islands. Following that, the paper will explore the culture, demographics and evolution of American Samoan football to illuminate its prominence as a NFL football player supplier. From this information, an analysis will be done and conclusions will be drawn to reach a solution to the purpose of this case study.

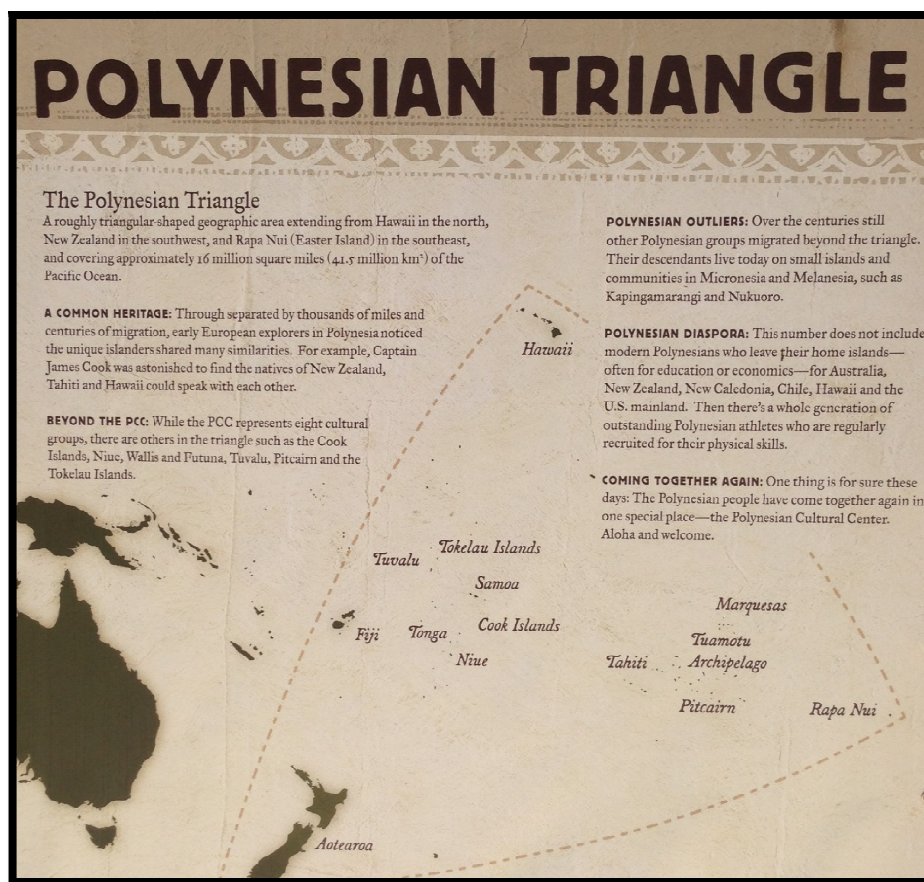
History

The American Samoan islands are Pacific Tropical islands and are the only United States territory below the equator. They are a group of seven islands, which make up 581 square miles (American Samoa, 2013). The two main islands are Tutuila and the Manu'a. Pago Pago, the capital, is located on the island of Tutuila, which has approximately 95% of the population (American Samoa, 2013). The rest of the Samoan islands are part of the country called Samoa (formerly Western Samoa). The American Samoan population evolved when Western Samoa used to send its convicts and banished people to the island of Tutuila. The Manu'a islands were home to a kingdom and the fiercest warriors.

In Samoan history, there used to be wars among the Polynesian Islands like Tonga, New Zealand, Fiji and Tahiti. As Christianity spread throughout the islands, sports using a ball, such as rugby, emerged. Rugby became the peaceful

“war,” based on entertainment and physical skill, a sport very similar to football (Tafiti, 2013).

As pictured below, American Samoa and Samoa are part of the Polynesian Triangle, which includes Tahiti, Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, and Hawaii. These islands have a long history of fighting and wars (Tafiti, 2013). This combative nature can be linked to the culture identity of Samoans, who are very physical in their lifestyle.



American Samoa became a U.S. territory in 1900 and was used as a naval base during World War II, similar to Hawaii. When the Americans first arrived on the American Samoan islands, they must have seen the players playing rugby and

realized they could teach them another physical sport, football. American Samoa and Samoa share heritage, language and culture; however, they have different lifestyles, based on outside influences from other nations.

The political system of American Samoa is based on the U.S. government structure, with the three branches of government and a governor as the top governmental official. American Samoa has one non-voting representative in the U.S. Congress. Samoa's political system is based on the British template with a prime minister as the head of state (Tafiti, 2013). American Samoa uses United States currency, while in Samoa, they use the *tala* as the equivalent of a dollar, and their money is called *tupe* (Tafiti, 2013).

Tonga used to control Samoa, but Samoan legend says that two brothers used trickery to defeat them and win Samoa's freedom (Savali, 2013). The islands of Tonga have produced many NFL players as well, including Haloti Ngata, whose parents are from there. Tonga is not nearly as statistically high in producing NFL players as American Samoa and Samoan-descended families, but it still is a significant producer outside the continental United States.

Culture

Culture is very different in Samoa and is an important foundation of a young Samoan football player's life. While playing football, Samoan players are representing their people with their actions, on and off the field. To understand why so many NFL players come from American Samoa, you must understand the culture that prepares them for the physicality, agility, team unity, diet and mentality required by football. The way of life of an American Samoan football

player is very different from that of a football player in the continental United States. This makes American Samoans special and gives American Samoa an advantage in producing a higher majority of NFL players than anywhere else in the world. Some of the differences in the culture include a family-first mentality, a high-starch diet, an emphasis on discipline, humbleness and a warrior mentality on the football field.

Language is one of the lasting parts of the Samoan culture. English is taught in the school systems, but families at home speak Samoan as another way of preserving the heritage of Samoa. Legends are sung and danced in the native Samoan language to maintain the importance of the Samoan heritage, while teaching the next generation of Samoa youth about the history of the Samoan people. Some Samoan language terms are listed in appendix 2 of this document.

Both Samoa and American Samoa use the Mauti System, which is the basis of their societal hierarchy (Tafiti, 2013). Village leaders are the chiefs. Society is based around each village in the region. The chiefs are the elders of the family, highly educated and respected by the people of the region. The respect for elders and people in higher positions is taught to American Samoan boys at a young age (Tafiti, 2013). This likely translates to respect for their football coaching staffs and helps instill leadership qualities and life skills that translate well into college and professional football.

In American Samoa, there are no gangs because of the Mauti system; the chiefs will bring in a family from a village if the children are acting up and deal with it before the police get involved (Savali, 2013). American Samoans are U.S.

nationals (not citizens) and have one congressman to represent them, who cannot vote (Savali, 2013). People from independent Samoa who play football cannot get scholarships, because they are not U.S. nationals and do not have visas. A lot of great football players miss out on the opportunity. Independent Samoans migrate to American Samoa to become educated because their system is even worse than that of American Samoa.

American Samoa has very unique aspects of its cultural heritage and traditions that make it exceptional and well equipped for what football involves. The most important word to American Samoans is *Aiga*, which means “family.” Family has a significant meaning in the culture; a third cousin is like a brother to Samoans. This family unity and bonding is a strength of American Samoan football players because the teams serve as a surrogate family, and the culture stresses the importance of family. Teamwork is essential in the sport of football, and American Samoans have more experience with this, due to their tight family structure. In contrast, on the mainland United States, the divorce rate is around 40 percent, with families spending more time in front of digital and television screens than conversing as a family (Trust Matters Most, 2013). In everything a young Samoan boy does, he is representing his family and demonstrating his upbringing, based on his actions and physical discipline (Savali, 2013).

American Samoans look out for their own people. In the sport of football, teammates have to be willing to do anything for one another, so a teammate can execute the play to be successful. This is natural to American Samoans. Linemen block for running backs or quarterbacks, and defensive linemen eat up blocks so

linebackers or other players can make successful plays. Samoans are not looking for impressive stats, due to their humble upbringings. Samoans are not taught to beat their chest when successful, but to be humble and mindful of their heritage, based on the values their family has taught them.

With the shared goal of making it to the NFL, Samoan boys go to college to represent their family and try their best to make it to the professional league. Their cultural upbringing makes young men independent and disciplined through chores and the way of life. Samoans are a glass half-full type of society, constantly trying to get better and never satisfied (Maglei, 2013). Boys in Samoa grow up strong and agile, but may be lacking in education and decision making (Maglei, 2013).

The main difference between Samoan players and mainland players is resources. On the mainland, players have training rooms, proper nutrition, new shoes, jerseys and proper safety equipment. This “makes us more hungry and more grateful where we came from, family keeps us driving with the goal of making it to the NFL to provide for our family because there is not much here economically” (Maglei, 2013). The minimum wage in American Samoa is between three to four dollars, which is lower than in the United States, but all of this contributes to keeping Samoans motivated to improve their lives and the lives of their families (Misipeka, 2013).

Family is the most important thing to Samoans, and the financial wealth associated with success in sports can enable them to provide money for their family. American Samoans are disciplined and have a knowledgeable and

involved family. Tamua Matu'u, the athletic director for all the high schools on the island, mentioned that it is a lot different for a first-generation college family than a second-generation college family, who can help give advice to their child about the college process (Matu'u, 2013). Most American Samoan NFL players grew up with family discipline, which has led to success. Samoan families are now encouraging boys to play football because they can see that the NFL can allow them to provide for their family. Previously, football was considered just a game and a waste of time (Matu'u, 2013). When family motivation is instilled in these boys, especially in a culture where family is the most important thing, young football players do not want to let their families down, so they dedicate their whole life to making them proud.

For some American Samoan players, homesickness is one reason they do not make it to the NFL. American Samoans in college are thousands of miles away from their families, which are so important to them. In many cases, the football coach becomes a father figure and the team becomes their family (Ailao, 2013). Samoan players do what is asked of them right away because that is how they were raised to act. Sometimes the players cannot adjust and return home to their families (Ailao, 2013). Sometimes you see three or four Samoans together on the same team (Ailao, 2013). This is a communal way of alleviating homesickness. However, Ailao, a member of Polynesian Cultural Center and a Samoan native, says individually they have a better shot of making it to the NFL because they are more independent and driven, whereas in groups, they can become distracted and not focused (Ailao, 2013).

One player who has made it to the NFL from American Samoa is Matt Toeaina (#75), who has played seven years in the NFL with the Chicago Bears after being drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals (Toeaina, 2013). Family is so important to American Samoans, yet the only gift Matt has bought for his family was a new Ford Expedition, four years ago. Pastor Albert Toeaina, Matt's father, has never asked, and wants to keep a low profile in American Samoa, and would only ask for money if they needed it (Toeaina, 2013). Pastor Albert truly believes any family's children can do the same thing his sons did and get off-island through football – they just need to be completely dedicated to the goal (Toeaina, 2013). There is no resentment among the Samoan people towards families like the Toeaina's because their children give back to the community, the families remain humble, and there is community pride for the success of all Samoan NFL players.

When Matt Toeaina's family go to visit him in Chicago, they stay for three weeks to a month at a time to see a couple of games and make the trip worthwhile. The family went to one game when it was one degree Fahrenheit outside; Pastor Albert wore five layers of clothing and was still cold. He will watch his son's games if they are on TV, but he cannot watch them all the time (Toeaina, 2013). Dropping Matt off at the University of Oregon and his sister off at Washington State at school on the mainland was hard for Pastor Albert, and he visited once a year for a 2-3 week period to see Matt play. The first year was tough, but at the University of Oregon there were a lot of Polynesian players around to build a community (Toeaina, 2013). One of those players was Haloti Ngata, who is of Tongan parents; he is Matt's best friend and was his teammate at

Oregon (Toeaina, 2013). His daughters now live on the island, but he hopes to have his boys back to give back and help out there; he says it will happen in good time (Toeaina, 2013).

Another aspect of the foundation of Samoan culture is discipline gained through daily chores done at a young age for the benefit of the family. Sifiti Fuller, a member of the Polynesian Cultural Center and a native of Samoa, stated that the men's tasks are to harvest the crops, hunt, fish and cook before school each day (Fuller, 2013). The young men go to school, then cook dinner, and do homework after that. Samoan men, searching for a better living, are brought up to be self-independent with the chores they are responsible for, which gives them the self-discipline to follow things through (Fuller, 2013). Also, Sifiti stated that the young boys go to school, and when they are done for the day, they are outside working on the farm or doing chores (Fuller, 2013). Young Samoan boys are outside constantly doing something. Being outside and continually working physically aids in the building of naturally strong football players. Samoans do not need the aid of weight training because they lift coconuts or other household items when doing their daily jobs for their family (Tafiti, 2013). The discipline of doing chores consistently is a significant difference compared to the lifestyles of many mainland Americans. Their cultural upbringing makes the children independent and disciplined through the doing of chores and an active physical lifestyle.

This is the fourth year for the high school players on American Samoa lifting weights for weight training (Maglei, 2013). Before that, players used

whatever exercise strength they got from doing chores at home. The acquired learning skills and level of responsibility give Samoan boys the discipline needed to push them to be high-level collegiate athletes and potential NFL players. Samoans are hardworking football players dedicated to the game and to the team as a family and a life.

As Elia Savali, one of the top administrators of the Department of Education and former football coach, noted, “[T]here is something to be said for a guy who grows up in the jungle. He is very coordinated because the physicality of the chores he does” and having to weave among the dense jungle vegetation (Savali, 2013). The agile football skills can be naturally acquired through the chores in the jungle and the traditions of the culture. In Samoa, history and traditions are passed down through generations by song and dance, which are taught to the young children so they can continue the traditions in the future. NFL All-Pro Troy Polamalu gave \$10,000 in equipment for the winner of the song and dance competition he held at his camp in early July 2013 (Matu'u, 2013). Dancing provides agility and strong balance, which are other characteristics of NFL players. In football, a player has to change direction, cut, back pedal, jump and dive in a split second without falling, which makes the Samoan cultural activities essential to acquiring these skills.

When people think about the Samoans in the NFL, they think of long



hair and tattoos. The long hair is a new trend started by the NFL players and is catching on, but it was never a traditional part of the culture. The tattoos, on the other hand, have a long history. The Samoan tribal sleeves were used to identify warriors in the military if their head got chopped off (Savali, 2013). Now, the NFL players use them more for intimidation and for the pride of their people. The traditional *Tatau* covers the entire thighs and butt up to the hips and is used to symbolize manhood. If you can go through this tattoo, you are considered a man in Samoan culture (Savali, 2013).

Biblically, it is not good to have tattoos. When Christianity was brought to the islands, the practice of tattooing was frowned upon. Usually, when the men get the *Tatau*, two men go at a time to encourage each other during the process, which is really painful and can be fatal (Savali, 2013). A lot of blood is lost, and the process involves using teeth on a stick, dipped in ink and slapping and tapping the stick to make the tattoo. The partners are there to take breaks during the process and recover from the pain. A man that gets this is considered an orator of the public and can do everything (Savali, 2013). If this process is done right, the pastor is involved, even though it is frowned upon by the church. There are many impostors getting the tattoo without understanding and participating in the historical meaning behind it.

Girls can get the *Malu*, which is the symbol of womanhood, on their leg, and also it is a symbol of being a public speaker as well (Savali, 2013). With new technology, using needles and machines is possible, but there are still problems

due to infection from the needles and hepatitis (Savali, 2013). The traditional *Tatau* is still done the same way as of old because of the meaning of the process.

Football is in the nature of Samoa “[W]e like contact, we hit hard,” stated Coach Atonio Tupuole, an assistant coach at Tafuna High School (Tupuole, 2013). Coach Kevin Maglei, another assistant coach at Tafuna High School, added, “[F]ootball is not a contact sport but a collision sport” (Maglei, 2013). Physical contact is bred into American Samoans in an early age. Jona Mageo is a twenty-one-year-old, experienced EMS paramedic; he stated that the most common football injuries are cramps, torn ACLs (knee ligaments) and twisted ankles (Mageo J. , 2013).

Possible causes of a lot of the injuries are the facts that the fields are not well groomed and maintained, and players are playing on dirt, lava rock and nails (Mageo J. , 2013). The grass is uncut, and players are using poor equipment. Safety is an issue. Injuries can also become problematic in smaller schools that have lower enrollments, so their athletes play both varsity and junior varsity football games, including both offense and defense. One story Jona referred to is of a player who blew out his knee during a game but then suited up and played in the following game (Mageo J. , 2013). There is peer pressure to not be labeled as weak. These players are taught to be tough like a man and to feel no pain (Mageo J., 2013). Toughness in the Samoan culture is another important characteristic in preparing NFL football players; however, in some cases, it can lead to long-term health concerns for untreated injuries.

Despite playing the aggressive sport of football, American Samoans are not prone to violence off the field. Police Chief Vaimaga Maiava observed that, in his opinion, football is “not a violent sport, just how it is played. It’s a mentality, like rugby just has body contact” (Maiava, 2013). He says crime in American Samoa is not high at all; the majority of crimes are basic crimes like burglary among children, who don’t really know better (Maiava, 2013). People leave their windows open and cars unlocked all the time. Murders do not happen for many years at a time. The Department of Public Safety is used at football games for crowd control, basically to help prevent fights between parents, but other than that there are very few arrests made on American Samoa (Maiava, 2013). Chief Vaimaga’s daily job is to manage the 150-160 sworn-in officers, give daily briefings, respond to calls and assist other agencies if they need help (Maiava, 2013). This comes from the inherent peacefulness and friendliness of the Samoan people.

In my travels, I realized American Samoans are large, friendly giants who are very genuine and who are not intimidating, as their size might imply. American Samoa does not have any homeless people living on the streets because someone is always there to take a person in (Savali, 2013). The elderly, the sick and the poor are all taken care of. Drivers do friendly beeps to let other drivers into traffic and everyone drives in a slow and relaxed manner; no one is in a rush. When you make eye contact with someone in American Samoa, it is reciprocated with a smile and a “*Talofa!*” Often while on the mainland, people will look at you strangely and try to avoid your gaze. The Samoan people were extremely friendly,

allowing people to show up unannounced to speak with them about their culture, and they went out of their way to help others, because when you are in American Samoa, you are family.

Samoans are a very devout Christian community, with 99% of the population of American Samoa being Christian made up of Congregationalists, Mormons, Catholics and Methodists (Aab, 2013). When Christianity came to the island, it controlled the combative nature of the Samoan people. Humbleness was instilled, and the people of American Samoa embraced the importance of God in their life. Many Samoans say faith in God plays a big part in helping players make it to the NFL. When the football players are alone on the mainland with no family, their faith keeps them motivated and helps alleviate some of their homesickness (Toeaina, 2013). The physical nature of Samoans started when



Samoans used to start fights for entertainment when they were bored, and then Christianity came to curb that activity (Savali, 2013). American Samoans say grace before every meal and close down all forms of business on Sundays. The American Samoan people wear their nicest clothes to church and have a church in every village. These buildings are usually some of the nicest and biggest structures in the villages.

Traditional Samoan food is prepared using banana leaves. In Samoa, the men do the cooking by cooking the banana leaves on hot rocks, which are heated by the fire. The banana leaves are placed on bottom, and the food that is to be cooked is put on top and then covered with many layers of banana leaves to make an oven-like effect to insulate the heat (Tafiti, 2013). An entire pig can be cooked in 45 minutes; this is more efficient and tasty than cooking a pig in a microwave (Fuller, 2013). Young men make the meals; the elders and women eat first, then the young men eat. Samoans usually make one big meal a day by cooking with the banana leaves (Fuller, 2013). Their diet is very heavy, containing meats and lots of carbs. For breakfast, there are neither eggs nor bacon. Rather, there is meaty food like chicken (Fuller, 2013). Samoans do not make extra food to freeze it and preserve it; they believe in eating fresh food every day, which is generally considered healthier and tastier (Fuller, 2013).

Samoans usually do not have silverware, and as a result, they start the meal by washing their hands in a bowl; then they begin eating the meal with their hands and saying grace. Samoans traditionally eat two meals a day, one being the main meal, prepared by the men. The size of the big meal for Samoans is a towering plate of food that is an accomplishment to finish. Some foods Samoans eat include:

- Samoan chop suey: clear spaghetti noodles with a gelatin taste, with a brown pork-like gravy
- A tuna-tasting paste with fish in it
- Teriyaki chicken and sirloin

- *Puleigi* with custard sauce – the cake is like pumpkin bread, but the custard has a plain vanilla nutmeg taste
- *Supoest* – a custard cup of plain, rice custard pudding, not thick but not soupy
- Pineapple bars, which taste like pineapple lemon wedges
- Roasted pig: pulled pork
- *Taro*: green bananas, root-like and starchy
- *Taamu* – big *taro*
- Fish
- Breadfruit
- Like the diets of a lot of today's youth, Samoan teens' diets include junk food like chips, hamburgers and soda (Fuller, 2013) (Savali, 2013) (Tafiti, 2013).

In contrast to the male jobs, the work of women in Samoan culture consists of taking care of the children, weaving, and keeping the house clean. Women also do some planting of crops (Fuller, 2013). There is less pressure on women to provide for their family, but this is changing as more women get the opportunity for a college education on the mainland. The pressure for the male football players to provide for their families is an important reason for their strong drive to make it to the NFL and a partial reason why the female Samoan athletes – who are just as gifted – are not receiving as much recruiting attention as the boys

Demographics

The environment in which young American Samoans grow up and learn to play football is extremely important to NFL success. American Samoans have health, educational, and economic factors that contribute to their physical readiness and motivation to succeed in the NFL. These factors also have limited the number of NFL players, which could be even higher if more resources were offered to the American Samoan people. This is another factor in producing top-level NFL players.

Dr. Sai Fuimaono, a Samoan medical doctor on the island, attributes football success in America Samoa to the big physique of Samoans (Fuimaono, 2013). American Samoans play football because of their American influences, and the Samoans play rugby because of their British influences. Samoans have the big body structure and bones equivalent to the Polynesians, which Dr. Fuimaono attributes to a combination of genetics, lifestyle and diet (Fuimaono, 2013). In American Samoan culture, “the bigger the person you can beat up the more power to you.” In society, “bigger is better” (Fuimaono, 2013).

Coach Rod Atafua, head football coach of Vo-Tech High School, explained to me the physical ability of the Samoan boys; he said that the Samoan boys are “naturally heavy boned” on the defensive and offensive lines (Atafua, 2013). The boys may lack speed, but make up for it in physical girth (Atafua, 2013). Samoans are built physically for football. They occupy space, are very agile and love playing other sports, such as volleyball, soccer and basketball. However, Coach Uta Mageo, assistant coach at Samoana High School, contends that “[w]e’re meant to play this game [of football]” (Mageo U. , 2013). Samoans

embrace their size and have been this large for many generations. This has led the obesity rate of American Samoans to be an astonishing 74.6%, while the average for the United States is only 27.6% (American Samoa, 2013). Obesity has led American Samoans to have 75% of their NFL players become either offensive or defensive linemen (Scott Boeck, 2008).

A display of the physical attributes of the Samoans versus the mainland players is in their size and weight, according to Tafuna High School assistant coach Kevin Maglei (Maglei, 2013). American Samoans, compared to mainland players of same the build and height, are 20-30 pounds heavier, and faster (Maglei, 2013). There is less preparation physically to develop the Samoan players in college; thus; they can focus more on the technical and finesse side of playing football. Many of the boys are naturally strong and can lift a 200-pound cart of coconuts, but they have trouble doing specific weight training because they are not used to the activity (Maglei, 2013). This physical strength came before protein shakes became a part of American Samoans' diets, which are new as of this past year (Maglei, 2013). Players who are not well off would eat just chips and soda, which are cheap, and would not get the protein they needed after their workout. Some players are saving up to buy protein by selling coconuts, but the price of one to two pounds of protein is sixty dollars in American Samoa, much more expensive than on the mainland because of shipping costs (Maglei, 2013). Peanut butter sandwiches are another source of protein that American Samoans consume.

As a result of this size, Samoans have a higher rate of diabetes, which Dr. Fuimaono thinks is caused by “high trans and saturated fats found in can foods and frozen foods that are now being more routinely eaten” (Fuimaono, 2013). A high starch diet was always part of the diet of American Samoans, but the diabetes issue is new, and Dr. Fuimaono thinks that preserved foods could be to blame (Fuimaono, 2013).

Elia Savali, a representative of the Department of Education and longtime citizen of American Samoa, stated that on the opening day of the first McDonalds in American Samoa, the franchise sold out all its food (Savali, 2013). The chain is open 24/7 and does a huge business on the island.

When it comes to injuries, Elia Savali said that many boys are big users of massages to help prevent and cure any muscle injury (Savali, 2013). However, the Samoan mentality is to play hurt; coaches encourage players to be tough and leave everything on the field (Savali, 2013). American Samoa is going through a process similar to that of many football programs regarding education about, and diagnosis of, concussions. There is no research to show that American Samoans are any different in the frequency of sustaining concussions compared to the mainland United States. Another factor that is many players do not have health insurance and are only covered for injuries by the Department of Education during football season (Savali, 2013). Any injury that happens during the offseason training and practices is borne by a player’s family. The medicine and hospital on the island are somewhat substandard because of funding and

resources. According to Jonas Mageo, it was not until recently that EMS medical staff were required to attend football games to care for injuries (Mageo J., 2013).

With regards to concussion injuries, American Samoa is undergoing the same problem as the mainland United States when it comes to reducing the number of head injuries. Now, within the past year, coaching staffs are being educated about the symptoms of concussions and how to deal with a player that is concussed (Mageo U., 2013). Players who sustain a concussion must sit out one week and then be cleared by the doctor before they can return to play. The difficult part is the diagnosis, because the coaches are familiar with what is normal for each player, and the players always want to go back in the game, which makes this a difficult challenge (Mageo J., 2013). Coach Uta Mageo, assistant coach at Samoana High School, stated, “[I]t is an issue, much like the NFL, kids love to play so much, it is going to be and will be an issue” (Mageo U., 2013). Samoan players love to hit; the problem is that concussions are not always reported. This is an ongoing situation that will have to continue to be reevaluated to determine further measures to be taken.

For serious injuries, major surgeries or health issues, Samoans will travel to Hawaii or the mainland to receive medical treatment, if they can afford it. One serious football injury mentioned by several American Samoans involved an incident when a young football player was paralyzed with a neck injury about five years ago; he was medevac’d off-island to Hawaii to receive care (Mageo J., 2013). As a result of the injury, he is paralyzed for the rest of his life and has stayed in Hawaii to have more extensive medical support.

Another aspect of the American Samoans' environment is the limited resources of, and funding from, the American Samoan education system. Tumua Matu'u, the Athletic Director of all the high schools on the island, is in charge of the ASHSAA (American Samoan High School Athletic Association), which has ten member schools, seven of which play football (Matu'u, 2013). The seven are Faga'itua High School, Leone High School, Manu'a High School, Nu'uuli Voc-Tech High School, Samoana High School, Kanana Fou High School and Tafuna High School. Every player must have at least a 2.0 G.P.A. to participate in high school sports (Matu'u, 2013).

Russ Aab, Deputy of Finance at the DOE Office, explained the education system of American Samoa, which is trying to emulate the mainland in order for the players to compete. One of the struggles facing the Samoans is that 97% of the students starting school speak little or no English, yet all the standardized testing is done in English, which is American Samoa's second language (Aab, 2013).

There is debate surrounding the fear of losing the Samoan language and culture, which Hawaii is now dealing with and teaching English to be competitive. In the National Series of Assessment, American Samoans struggle with the English portion (Aab, 2013). Samoan is the daily language, and students are beginning to have more access to the Internet, where English is becoming the standard language. This is adding to the dilemma. Samoans do better in math, which illustrates their intelligence, but the language curve is holding them back (Aab, 2013). Still, a lot of players looking for scholarships have trouble passing the NCAA requirements. This has led schools to provide extra programs for SAT

and college prep for football teams, so players can have better scholarship opportunities (Aab, 2013).

A handful of players use football as a means to go off-island for an education. These players are very focused on and off the field; however, the majority of natives play football for recreational enjoyment and competition. Coach Mageo reinforces in his players the academic portion of football, “student first athlete second” (Mageo U., 2013). A select few follow that code in hopes of getting a scholarship for an education. Coach Mageo claims that what makes Samoan players special and different from other football players is that they are “coachable kids and have respect for their elders, they may be not as talented but no kid is going to work as hard” (Mageo U., 2013). Making the NFL is icing on the cake; the children that get scholarships are there for an education. There is a trend of Tongans’ going to the NFL because their education system is based on the 13-year British System, which gives them an extra year of education (Savali, 2013).

There is very poor funding for the school system. The average cost per student is \$4000, while on the mainland it is around \$10000 per student (Aab, 2013). There is one community college on the island, which most families cannot afford. American Samoa is 60% below the poverty level (Mykyta, 2012). Students who achieve the minimum requirement of 1500 on the SAT receive a scholarship; roughly 15-18 students achieve this feat each year (Aab, 2013).

Teachers are another issue, with a starting salary at \$17,000, which limits interest in the profession. Many do not have the degrees to be qualified teachers

when they start teaching at the schools and are working while teaching to go to the University of Hawaii to get a BED (Aab, 2013). Once they acquire their qualifications, many teachers then leave to get a better salary somewhere else, starting the process over again. Russ mentioned that every state's education is funded by property tax, 92% local and 8% federal (Aab, 2013). In American Samoa, it is 80% federal and 20% local. American Samoa is not tied to No Child Left Behind, but education needs to improve through better quality teachers (Aab, 2013).

Vice Principal Ben Teo of Tafuna High School helps lead one of the biggest school on the islands. The school is very big, like a small college campus. This past school year, there were 1,296 students at the end of the year, compared to 1,346 at the beginning of the year (Teo, 2013). The few 50 dropouts were children who just did not want to go to school anymore, and in American Samoa the law do not do anything if they see a child in the street during school hours. The graduating class was 313 seniors, with 100 of them going to college, junior college or the military (Teo, 2013). This school year, the popular fields of interest for the college students were business and accounting. Most of the college students were going to West Coast schools, primarily the California area Division I and II four-year institutions or junior colleges (Teo, 2013). Part of the challenge is academic standards; when students get to their colleges, they are not always as prepared to survive academically at a Division 1 school. That is why many are encouraged to go to junior college first (Teo, 2013). Students with talent can be better prepared to succeed at college with preparation at a junior college. The

ASCC (American Samoan Community College on the island) is now operating on a four-year curriculum (Teo, 2013). When it comes to academic resources at Tafuna High School, all classrooms are fitted with PCs, and there are three computer labs (Teo, 2013). This was the first year two laptop carts could be reserved by a teacher for students to use in class during instructional time (Teo, 2013). Also, it was the first year of iPad use in the classroom to increase reading comprehension in students. The school is outfitted with fiber optics and wi-fi; however, the current teacher-student ratio is 1:38, which is down from the previous 1:42 (Teo, 2013). The goal is to get it to 1:25. Therefore, the personal teacher-to-student attention for students who need extra help is not where it should be to increase success and graduation rates.

Around 1984, American Samoa began exporting students to the U.S. to get an education and play football (Savali, 2013). This generation paved the way for today. Many of these students went to junior college first before going to another university. For Samoans, the two main avenues to an education off-island are sports and the military (Teo, 2013). The goal of exporting American Samoans to the mainland United States is to boost the success rate of Samoans graduating and coming back with degrees. Tonga and other Polynesian Islands are starting to compete with Samoa for exporting NFL players, which is why Samoa has a need for better coaching at the high school and Pop Warner levels, to get these players prepared to compete (Savali, 2013). Volleyball is another important sport not receiving much attention, despite having good players, but the coaching is not as good as it could be (Savali, 2013).

The new trend is for Samoans to migrate to high school to get a better education before college, getting scholarships so they have a higher success rate. The Mormons go to Utah and are exposed to the education system at a high school level. The latest example of this strategy of migration is exemplified in Class of 2014 defensive end Austin Maloata, who committed to USC after moving from American Samoa to the mainland in March. “With little recruiting attention coming his way following his junior season, Maloata and his father, Faleupolu, decided that he'd have a better shot at gaining notice almost 5,000 miles away in Corona, where he now resides with an uncle” (Curren, 2013). This is the most recent example of an American Samoan coming to the mainland to get adjusted to the education system, to get looked at more for college recruiting and to have the benefits of better equipment to continue improving his football skill.

Poverty in American Samoa is very high, with 61% of the 69,543 citizens being below the poverty level and average income being \$18,219 (Per Capita Personal Income by State, 2013).

Unemployment in American Samoa is 29.8%, compared with the United States, where it is 7.1% (Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2013). American Samoa has very little economic self-sustainability on its islands. Tourism is not a big economic stimulator for the area because the infrastructure is not built to handle high volumes of tourists. Travel to



the islands from Hawaii involves a five-and-a-half-hour flight, and flights run only three times a week. There are three hotels on the islands, all with basic amenities for their guests. Most customers of the hotels are people doing academic research, working for the American Samoan government or trying to get away from the tourists. A tourist should only drink the bottled water because the wells have different bacteria than on the mainland United States, which can make a tourist ill. Tourist activities are not highlighted, even though there are opportunities like those in Hawaii, because American Samoa is a Pacific Tropical climate all year long.

The main industries are working for the government, working on the fishing boats or working at the Starkist Tuna Cannery. The Starkist Tuna Cannery is one of the major job suppliers for American Samoa. Many Independent Samoans come to



American Samoa to work in the factory, which is owned by a Korean group that does not pay minimum wage (Savali, 2013). There is hard bargaining going on, because if Samoans ask for minimum wage, then Starkist has threatened to leave, which would be very bad for the economy, so there a stalemate. Some economists have estimated that eighty percent of the Samoan economy is employed in tuna canneries (Pelley, 2010). If Samoans do not have a college education, then it is

very hard to find any type of decent paying job besides working for the canneries or the fishing companies.

Football players are motivated to get off-island to provide for their families because there is not much work waiting for them in American Samoa. American Samoans have the highest per capita production of not only NFL talent but also of military recruits (Matu'u, 2013). The military and football are the two major outlets for young American Samoan boys to get off-island and receive an education, which will enable them to provide for their families from the mainland, sending home money, or come back to work in the government to help make changes to improve economic conditions on the island (Maiava, 2013).

One of the major areas of economic uncertainty revolves around the agreement American Samoa made with the United States of America when it decided to become a United States territory. American Samoans became U.S. nationals rather than citizens and American Samoa became a strategic refueling site for American military ships (Savali, 2013). One of the major stipulations American Samoans emphasized was that no outsiders could buy property on the islands. Only people with Samoan heritage or marriage could purchase property on the islands (Savali, 2013). The reason for this stipulation was that American Samoa was concerned about its culture being destroyed by outsiders trying to change American Samoa. As a result of this stipulation, it is hard to bring in economic sustainability without the help of American or foreign businesses and citizens to pump money into the economy.

This is the current dilemma American Samoa is facing. The community wants to continue to advance and get stronger. However, it does not want to forget its heritage and lose its culture in a situation similar to the one Hawaii is facing. Learning English and letting outsiders purchase property in American Samoa would significantly help the economy, but it might come at the expense of the loss of the culture of the people.

The Evolution of American Samoan Football

The outside environment American Samoan football players grow up and live in is significantly different for a lot of football players who do not make it to the NFL. The environment of American Samoa has a strong effect on motivating the football players to succeed at bigger and better things. This environment and the culture of American Samoa have led players and coaches to play the game in a different way, emphasizing toughness and physical play. The difference in the way football is taught and played and is going in American Samoa is another contributing piece to understanding the success of American Samoans making it to the NFL.



One of the major differences in the way football is played in American Samoa, compared with the mainland, is the difference in equipment. Most schools do not have the budget to purchase new equipment to provide for every young football player. Equipment is usually all donated, and if it is purchased, it is

second hand (Mageo U., 2013). If there is not enough to go around for every player, sometimes players will have to share (Misipeka, 2013). The most common type of missing equipment is mouth guards. Players will have the plastic attachment to the helmet, but not the actual mouth guard itself. Jona Mageo, an EMS officer, says he sees it all the time (Mageo J., 2013). The rules and regulations for high school football are “very lax here” (Mageo J., 2013). Often, the equipment most boys are using to playing football would not be allowed on the mainland United States because of the poor condition it is in. Players who can’t afford kneepads might purchase \$1.50 flip-flops and tape them to their knees for padding (Mageo J., 2013).



Coach Kevin Maglei of Tafuna High Schools says the most common injuries are shoulder injuries because the equipment is not safe due to defects, obsolescence or overuse; however, there are

not enough funds for new equipment, which results in the team’s having to rely on what they have (Maglei, 2013). Some players who can afford equipment will purchase their own, but most cannot afford to do so.

The Pacific tropical climate of America Samoa is very hot, humid and wet, which causes the pads to get mildew. The heat disintegrates plastic, and cleats are damaged by the rain and muddy field surface (Maglei, 2013). Saint Dom Bosco in

California gave weights to Tafuna High School; the Assistant Coach, Atonio Tupuole, says all the other schools are jealous of these second-hand weights (Tupuole, 2013). Before that, the players would do their weight training and offseason preparation by doing chores and just running around the island.

Austin Maloata, class of 2014, committed to USC, reflected on the equipment differences in American Samoa and California; "Back in Samoa, we don't have turf or any of this stuff," said Maloata, who prepped at Leone High



School in Pago Pago prior to his arrival in Southern California. "We play on rocks. There are practices where you get tackled, and you get up and your knee is all bloody. So coming here to Centennial and feeling the turf here, it was shocking. Kids over here, they have all of the sleds, they have all the bags, they have turf ... they have everything. In Samoa, we use the actual players themselves as tackling dummies" (Curren, 2013).

Football in American Samoa is much like that in Texas, in the sense that all the small shops close when the games are being played,



and everyone goes to see the teams play (Teo, 2013). When it comes to games, football has one stadium, which all the teams use, a grass stadium called Veterans

Memorial Stadium. Games are played on Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Matu'u, 2013). Other sports, like soccer, are played on a separate field on the other side of the island. Every high school also has practice fields closer to their school. At Tafuna High School, the practice field is in the center of the school buildings. There are no football goal posts, just a grass field, which was more than Samoana High School had (Teo, 2013). At Samoana High School, the field is not well kept at all; players are playing on dirt, lava rock, nails and uncut grass. The weather in Samoa is either really hot with high humidity or heavy, rainy downpours that flood the field and leaves it with big puddles (Mageo U. , 2013).



At Fagaitua High School, the field is a bus ride away from the school and is built on an old waste dump (Savali, 2013). The practice conditions on American Samoa are significantly different from those on the privileged surfaces most players on the mainland U.S. have at their disposal.

The American Samoan style of play accentuates the physical size and attributes of the players. For the most part, all schools run the option offense. The triple option system is preferred because most quarterbacks' arm strength and throwing ability have not been fully developed (Mageo U., 2013). But now, like the rest of football teams on the U.S. mainland, they are moving to the spread

offense. Defensively, the team runs a 3-4 or 3-5, or 5 fronts, called a “full-house” (Mageo U., 2013).

The season preparation starts as soon as the previous season concludes, especially with the “lax rule” system, whereby coaches are all trying to get an edge and prepare all year long. Practices can run at least eight hours a day during the off-season, and during school, they run from the end of the school day until dark (Mageo J., 2013).

The difference Coach Mageo saw in the football style on the mainland is that more technique and footwork are practiced. “Here in America Samoa it is *mano-on-mano*.” Strength is all that matters (Maglei, 2013). “The last two years we have been changing the game to be more finesse, with the ultimate goal to get kids more college ready” (Maglei, 2013). Elia Savali mentioned that more Samoans are getting looked at for skilled positions because height is an important attribute. Samoans have always been big, but now they are growing taller (Savali, 2013). Some people believe it is because the players are doing less lifting for chores, but others think it’s the genes of parents being of mixed heritage or part Caucasian or African-American (Savali, 2013).

The American Samoa Youth Sports (AYS) Football Program (similar to Pop Warner Football) is building skills for the positions of receivers and running backs to get noticed by college recruits. Currently, the majority of college recruits are linemen and linebackers. Defensive backs, running backs and wide receivers are positions that coaches hope to develop to enhance college and NFL football opportunities. The new Pop Warner program on the island is helping a lot in

making it easier for high school coaches to not have to take as long to teach basic skills; instead, they can focus on tactics, game-planning schemes and technique.

The AYS program was started three years ago; before that, only high school football was played (Matu'u, 2013). The program is broken down by age groups, not weight classes. Children who are thirteen and of all shapes and sizes will play football, which can involve huge size discrepancies in some cases (Mageo J., 2013). These past three years of the AYS program, Dr. Fiamano says he has made players more aware of the game and how to play it safely, which he believes has led to a decline in the number of football injuries (Fuimaono, 2013).

All of the current and former NFL players from American Samoa give back to the high schools in different ways. Some donate football equipment, others run camps and clinics and some give monetary donations. Some NFL players who are giving back to the schools include Troy Polamalu (whose parents are Samoan, born in California), who is giving \$10,000 in equipment for the winner of a song and dance competition he is having at his camp in early July, 2013 (Matu'u, 2013); Isaac Sopoaga, a Samoana High School Alum, who gives \$1,000 to all the village pastors to do with as they see fit (Savali, 2013); and Jonathan Fanene, who gave \$5,000 in equipment to Tafuna High School, which he attended (Savali, 2013).

American Samoa has received attention over the last couple of years, and now people are starting to take notice of the need to help its people and the talented football players on the island. In the summer of 2013, three football camps were held to bring in people from the mainland U.S. to teach both players

and coaches techniques to enhance their football talent. These groups also brought with them football equipment and donations for the players and people of American Samoa. These camps are viewed very positively by all of the people. The governor hosts the camp members at a dinner and provides transportation for the camp staff to travel anywhere they need to go (Matu'u, 2013). The camps include the June Jones Foundation Annual Mission trip, led by head football coach June Jones of SMU.

June Jones was the former head football coach at the University of Hawaii from 1999-2007 and actively recruited many American Samoans during his tenure there. He learned about the needs of the people and began his charitable work to help the people and players in American Samoa. Since being named the head football coach at SMU, he has continued his charitable efforts on an annual basis. The Goodwill Mission provides free medical care and supplies, athletic equipment and student fitness programs for the people of American Samoa (American Samoa Goodwill Mission, 2013). In addition, five \$2,000 academic college scholarships will be awarded to deserving American Samoan high school seniors (American Samoa Goodwill Mission, 2013).

The Troy Polamalu Camp brought 70 coaches, 60 football staff, 10 volleyball staff and many players to its second annual camp on the island (Matu'u, 2013). The camp gave away football equipment, taught proper techniques and had a dance competition. Lastly, the Tennessee Camp, led by the Smart Brothers, who are fundamental in the recruiting of Samoan boys to play in college, brings in college coaches to evaluate and teach the players and coaches tactics of football

(Matu'u, 2013). The camp has college and high school football coaches from the State of Tennessee come down to share their experiences and teach about the game of football to local football players. As part of Field House 100 American Samoa and Tafuna Baptist's mission to help the community, the camp brings down coaches from the mainland to run the Tennessee Football Camp of Champions, which was founded in 2006 by the brother of Brandon Smart, Brian Smart, also of FH100 American Samoa and also a Pastor at Tafuna Baptist Church (Hayner, 2012).

The emergence of the Smart Brothers and their recruiting program, Fieldhouse 100, is helping to get American Samoan football players noticed by college recruiters. Field House 100 is a non-profit organization run by Brandon Smart to help promote educational options for student-athletes in American Samoa, Texas, Tennessee and New Zealand. The mission of the organization is to help students earn college opportunities while playing sports. They have helped obtain over \$2.5 million in scholarships over the last three years and have placed student-athletes in over 25 different universities in 11 states across the United States (Recruiting, 2013). This program takes postgame footage to send out to college coaches to look into American Samoa and other Polynesian regions for recruiting.

Coach Keiki Misipeka, an assistant coach at Samoana High School and Officer of Player Development at Fieldhouse 100, explained that "coaches are beginning to take notice" through the exposure from the *60 Minutes* television segment. People are looking into American Samoa to find top NFL football

players (Misipeka, 2013). Recruiting is done through the success of other Samoan players, and coaches are calling asking for the same type of player. The earlier players have established a pathway to success. One quote from Jesse Sapou (a pioneer NFL Samoan player) that Coach Atonio Tupuole tells his team “before preparing for battle” is “we are walking on the backs going before us,” which means that the established pathway of former NFL Samoans is making it easier for future ones to make it to college, and possibly to the NFL (Tupuole, 2013). Success breeds success.

Conclusion and Analysis of the American Samoa Case Study

From talking with football players, you can understand that for American Samoans, “football is a way of life” (Savali, 2013). Children on the mainland, when asked what they want to do when they grow up, will rattle off a list of various professions in different fields and locations around the world. However, if you ask young American Samoan football players, a significantly larger percentage will say they want to play in the NFL. The shared goal of making it to the NFL through the established pathway of playing the game they love is now as strong as ever. There are genetic and physical factors that make a person more physically gifted to make it to the NFL, but those are hard to account for. What can be accounted for, however, are the actions taken during the life of a person that utilize those physical gifts to make them great NFL players. American Samoan culture, demographics and the way American Samoans practice football are the reasons that American Samoa is the most significant producer of NFL

players per capita. American Samoa has all the ingredients to get players drafted into the NFL each year.

The American Samoa culture and heritage have taught the NFL players coming out of this region the self-discipline to continue working at their craft and to get better at playing football each day. In contrast, it usually takes mainlanders a longer time to realize the importance of dedication to the game and a continued drive to be successful. The mainland U.S. has the benefit of a plethora of Pop Warner and youth football programs; however, the participants in these programs also have countless other activities vying for their time and attention as well. American Samoans have the benefit of fewer distractions to take them away from their focus on football. The discipline to be attentive listeners trying to absorb all they can from the coaching they receive helps Samoans learn the correct way to play football. American Samoans also have the self-discipline to stay humble and not let success stop them from continuing to work hard toward their goal of making it to the NFL. Furthermore, American Samoans let their play on the field do the talking and win accolades, not their voice; Samoan culture does not practice self-promotion. This is uncommon for many NFL players.

American Samoans also take pride in representing their families, who show them continued support every time they play a football game. The involvement of families in something a child does will encourage and motivate the child to succeed. How each child plays the game is reflective of their family's characteristics; therefore, no player wants to be labeled as weak. When the football player goes to play in college, the team becomes their family, especially

given the geographical distance of American Samoa from any United States college or university, which involves a minimum flight of 10 hours to the U.S. mainland. This geographical separation from their real family creates a full immersion in their football family. Lastly, it is in the American Samoan mentality to be tougher, stronger and better than the next player. Their combative island warrior history has shown that Samoans always want to hit, and that can be seen in how aggressively they play the game of football. The game of rugby is the peaceful game Christianity brought in (football followed many years later, brought by American military personnel) to reduce the violent wars among the islands and replace them with the wars of sport.

The demographic environment of American Samoa contributes to motivating players in the region to succeed. With the a population at a 76% obesity level, the football players coming out of American Samoa already have the size and weight to compete in the NFL. Their high starch and meat diet makes Samoans fueled for physical activity and builds their size for football. An important aspect of success is the Samoans' desire to obtain opportunities; "less opportunities increase desire for opportunities" (Tafiti, 2013). Samoans take advantage of the limited opportunities and resources they have. Football is the vehicle to the next level, and it is an opportunity for success and education. Football can pay for the schooling of many young Samoan boys. With sparse economic opportunities in American Samoa, players are motivated to provide for their families and obtain a college education to contribute to society in American Samoa. The desire for more college education can encourage American Samoans

to channel their self-discipline to leave the island either through the military or by earning an athletic college scholarship. There are very limited options for non-athletes, because few Samoans have the financial support to pay for college or have the grades to receive an academic scholarship. In this situation, less is more.

The football played on the island of American Samoa is not the finesse-filled style of high school football like that of the mainland U.S. Samoans like contact, and the physicality of football is engrained in these players. This makes them fearless warriors on the football field. Football on the islands of American Samoa is *mano-on-mano*, where the strongest and toughest players will win. This, along with the sparse and inferior football equipment, makes the players practice the basics of the game and builds their toughness. They must be mentally and physically strong to endure the game of football.

The American Samoan culture allows for a focused, more relaxed and simpler life without distractions. Kap Tafiti, who has been at the Polynesian Cultural Center for over 20 years and was born and raised in Samoa, stated, “The three most important attributes of Samoans are: discipline, physical ability and hunger for opportunities” (Tafiti,



2013). Football in American Samoa is an established pathway to success, built on many generations of football players that have come before. The successful NFL

players build awareness about the talented and hardworking players on the islands. Through documentaries like the *60 Minutes* “American Samoa: Football Island,” the 1980’s *Sports Illustrated* article called “Pick Them Out of Coconut Trees” and academic research such as this project, word spreads about the unique population of American Samoa. American Samoans have the proper conditions to keep developing NFL-caliber players at a high rate. The preservation of their unique culture at the cost of economic benefits has kept young Samoans focused on achieving the goal of realizing success by becoming NFL football players. American Samoa football is so strongly connected to its people that it is more than just a game; football represents who American Samoans are at a fundamental level.

Final Conclusion

The goal of this thesis is to examine the geographical origins of professional football players drafted into the NFL. One finding is that besides the states of Texas, Florida and California, there are numerous other regions which have characteristics that have led to NFL Draft pick selections. The quantities produced and percentages of production do not necessarily lead to NFL stardom, but there may be factors, like the independent variables discussed in this document, that can help increase one’s chances of making it to the NFL. A look through the historical data shows that certain regions have better conditions than others for stimulating the production of NFL Draft picks. NFL front office personnel and college scouts could apply these results to narrow the search for the

next NFL player. This information could allow these individuals to pinpoint a certain region of the country to look for talent for specific positions.

These factors do not guarantee that a player from one of these top regions or having these certain variables will be successful in the NFL or even make it there; rather, the analysis shows historical results that can enhance expectations for the future. The percentage of the United States population drafted into the NFL is only 0.1021%. This percentage emphasizes the elite status of NFL players because they are such a small percentage of individuals that have the physical and mental ability to make it in the profession of football. They truly are the best of the best.

My suggestions are to continue to look to the three primary states of Texas, Florida and California, which have historically generated NFL talent, but also look into regions that have produced for the player positions various teams are looking for. This may increase the efficiency of selecting an NFL-caliber player based on a certain position. Lastly, looking into players growing up in the Southeast geographic region, with higher obesity levels, income levels and educational ratings, may factor into the probability of getting into the NFL. These results can help an NFL or college recruiting staff find the next great football player.

In the future, studies like this could examine the progression and effects of certain college programs in regard to the development of NFL players. They could also evaluate the success of undrafted players at specific positions and note in what regions they honed their skills. The data here cover 26 years; it would also

be interesting to compare geographical regions and variables contributing to NFL players fifty years ago, when the style of NFL was more run-oriented, compared with the current wide-open offenses that characterize today's game.

The research in this document addressed a subject matter that could be further expanded on. Finding data on this material was not as easy as expected. I was tasked with using multiple sources, especially for the Draft data and hometowns of players. Traveling to American Samoa had great value for my gaining a personal and firsthand view of the unique traits of the region that make it a significant producer per capita of NFL talent. Hopefully, this information can help contribute to future research in the field.

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Appendix 1- State Abbreviations

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>State/Region</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>State/Region</u>
AL	Alabama	NV	Nevada
AK	Alaska	NH	New Hampshire
AZ	Arizona	NJ	New Jersey
AR	Arkansas	NM	New Mexico
CA	California	NY	New York
CO	Colorado	NC	North Carolina
CT	Connecticut	ND	North Dakota
DE	Delaware	OH	Ohio
FL	Florida	OK	Oklahoma
GA	Georgia	OR	Oregon
HI	Hawaii	PA	Pennsylvania
ID	Idaho	RI	Rhode Island
IL	Illinois	SC	South Carolina
IN	Indiana	SD	South Dakota
IA	Iowa	TN	Tennessee
KS	Kansas	TX	Texas
KY	Kentucky	UT	Utah
LA	Louisiana	VT	Vermont
ME	Maine	VA	Virginia
MD	Maryland	WA	Washington
MA	Massachusetts	WV	West Virginia
MI	Michigan	WI	Wisconsin
MN	Minnesota	WY	Wyoming
MS	Mississippi	DC	Washington DC
MO	Missouri	AS	America Samoa
MT	Montana	TO	Tonga
NE	Nebraska	USA	United States

Appendix 2- Samoan Language Terms:

- “Talofa”- hello
- Tamua Matu’u taught me- for words with a “g” use it similar to the word “thing” so silent “g” and more “n” sound
- All the vowels in the language are pronounced the same as they are spoken in Spanish
- *Most important word*- “Fiaaloalo”- respect
- “Miti”-rubbing hands
- “Pati”- 1 loud clap of hands
- “Poo” 1 low clap of hands
- “Umoo”- cooking with rocks
- Apple Banana- boiled like baked potatoes (also used to fill holes in canoe because of waterproof ability)
- “Afi”- fire
- “Malei”- sharp stick
- “Ma’a”- rock
- “Tala”-dollar
- “Tupe” or “Kupe”- money-round
- Samoan clothing for men and women is known by several names. Some the popular Samoan clothes are *puletasi*, *lava lava* and some others. While

puletasi is exclusively a female dress in Samoa, *lava lava* can be worn by both men and women. *Lava lava* is a kind of sarong that the Samoan people wore by wrapping up the body. *Puletasi* is also a wrap-up type of clothing in Samoa. This dress covers the full body and usually wore by the Samoan young girls. *Puletasi* is also a very traditional dress that is worn generally for traditional Samoa occasions. Moreover, for going to church, Samoan girls wear this special dress. *Lava lava* is another traditional Samoan dress. This dress is worn by both the Samoan men and women.

- “Fono”- legislature
- “Manuwieia” –good luck, God bless, Blessings
- “Palagi”- White person
- “Malo”- hey, like Hawaiian Mahalo
- “Manu”- young coconut with sugar water inside
- “Tatau”- manhood tattoo on whole lower part of man’s body
- “Malu” – womanhood tattoo on leg of woman

(Savali, 2013) (Tafiti, 2013)

Appendix 3- Institutional Review Board Form



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY Institutional Review Board MEMORANDUM

TO: Rodney Paul
DATE: September 12, 2013
SUBJECT: Determination of Exemption from Regulations
IRB #: 13-266
TITLE: *Why American Samoa Produces So Many More NFL Football Players Per Capita than Anywhere Else in the United States?*

The above referenced application, submitted for consideration as exempt from federal regulations as defined in 45 C.F.R. 46, has been evaluated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the following:

1. determination that it falls within the one or more of the five exempt categories allowed by the organization;
2. determination that the research meets the organization's ethical standards.

It has been determined by the IRB this protocol qualifies for exemption and is assigned to category 2. This authorization will remain active for a period of five years from **September 11, 2013** until **September 10, 2018**.

CHANGES TO PROTOCOL: Proposed changes to this protocol during the period for which IRB authorization has already been given, cannot be initiated without additional IRB review. If there is a change in your research, you should notify the IRB immediately to determine whether your research protocol continues to qualify for exemption or if submission of an expedited or full board IRB protocol is required. Information about the University's human participants protection program can be found at: <http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/human-research-irb.html> Protocol changes are requested on an amendment application available on the IRB web site; please reference your IRB number and attach any documents that are being amended.

STUDY COMPLETION: The completion of a study must be reported to the IRB within 14 days.

Thank you for your cooperation in our shared efforts to assure that the rights and welfare of people participating in research are protected.

Tracy Cromp, M.S.W.
Director

Note to Faculty Advisor: This notice is only mailed to faculty. If a student is conducting this study, please forward this information to the student researcher.

DEPT: FALK Sports Management, 810 Nottingham Rd

STUDENT: Robert Murray

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